

Northern Lights

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Summary: A hijack tattoo AU: Jack works at a small tattoo shop in the middle of Burgess, when a young man named Hiccup moves to town and completely changes his life.

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note: this is my first fan fic, so please don't hate me. if you have any comments or concerns go ahead and tell me, and nothing rude please. Sorry if it seems a bit rushed towards the end, but I wanted to get this posted quickly since I've been putting it off for a while. Thanks for reading!

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><p>Chapter One: Northern Lights

Deep in the heart of a restless city full of fast-talking star-struck wannabes, and the never-ending flow of potential artists, stood a small beacon to the masses of outcasts and drunken idiots; a tattoo parlor by the name of 'Northern Lights.' This one shop just seemed so different in comparison to the others in the town of Burgess, mostly because of those who inhabited its colorful space. It seemed like a cool summer breeze, full of life and hopeful promises, in comparison to the wintry chill that ran rampant through the rest of this small world.

The parlor was ran by a large, Russian man named Nicholas St. North; one look at him, and you would think he was Santa gone rogue. He stood thick and tall, a giant to his customers and employees, and was especially intimidating with his intricate tattoos on his arms which read 'naughty' and 'nice.' His bushy beard and thick eyebrows added to his Russian look, silver strands of white dancing in compliance to his face. But he had a heart of gold that contradicted his brutish appearance, especially when he smiled or talked about how much he loved children and my how he loved children. Not to mention a large sum of his earnings went to orphanages, earning him the nickname

Santa Claus among the youth in town. He even wore a large, fluffy red coat just to humor them.

Alongside him worked an equally self-contradicting man by the name of Aster. He was a well-defined man, always catching the eye of passing women (and a few men), and practically had them swooning when he started to speak with his strong Aussie accent. Along his tan skin danced intricate tribal symbols, looking like they had been done by some cockamamie shaman with a steady hand, as some would say. Even though he put up a tough exterior, with a sharp tongue to match, he was actually quite the sweetheart, doing kindhearted things in his free time when no one was around to see. He also had an interesting pastime that the others didn't know about: he liked to collect Faberge eggs.

One of the artists, whom seemed quite the oddball, was a stout man called Sandy. Unfortunately, due to his tendency to daydream and fall asleep in the lounge, he had earned himself the title Sandman. He couldn't complain though, in fact he couldn't say anything at all, he was mute. Sandy made up for it though by doing some of the best tattoos people had ever seen, weaving complicated colors together in an absolute mesh of fantasy and dreams. He didn't sport any blotches of ink himself. No, he was happy with his gold skin and spiky, sand-colored hair. His choice of clothing ran opposite to the weather, since he liked to wear what could be considered California casual in their city plagued with a never-ending autumn.

The only female to work there (and not be scared off by the strange trio of men) was Toothiana the receptionist or Anna for short. Of course some found her name to be strange, but not as weird as her appearance that seemed to fit perfectly like a puzzle piece to the parlor's atmosphere. She sported locks all assortments of the rainbow, her hair gliding back and coming to a spiky point in the back, almost like some exotic bird had lent her its feathers. Her eyes also shone a bright variation of pinkish-purple, drawing in and dazzling the potential suitors that watched her with fascinated gleams as they sat in the waiting area, either waiting for their turn under the needle, or coming in to say hello. She always wore creative and colorful clothing, showing off all the highlights of her bubbly personality, which shone brightly alongside her busy-bee attitude. Toothiana did have an odd fetish though: an unnatural fascination with teeth. She had always wanted to be a dentist, but had decided to work in the shop instead beside her friends, much to everyone's delight. Although to their dismay, she had the tendency to check everyone's teeth, had a model of choppers set on her desk, and even got a tattoo of a tooth on her shoulder. How charming...

One of newest employees to start working there was Jack. His birth name was Jackson Overland, but he quickly discarded that title in favor of something more suitable: Jack Frost. To fit his new name, he dyed his brown hair a pure, solid white and got colored contacts in a crystalline-blue hue to cover his bright brown irises. Well, this was all done before he joined the team, when he had turned 19 and moved into a nearby apartment complex. He always chose to wear form-fitting clothes, including his favorite blue hoodie for venturing outside, and tank tops around the shop to show off his tattoos. A majority of them rested on the right side of his body, including but not limited to: a black snowflake on his shoulder, a henna flower that wound around his upper arm, and a set of small jaguar spots on his neck. Aster said he looked like a massive gumby running around with such an

odd assortment of ink, but he couldn't really complain since business kicked up when the lad started working. Yep, once Jack signed up, the shop had a sudden influx of girls all wanting to get a splotch of ink from him (and to ogle when no one was looking). And of course he flirted back with them, but he always made sure to get the job done before he could snatch up their digits; because if anyone caught on, especially Aster, he would never hear the end of it. Endless ranting about how inappropriate that was, and how he wasn't supposed to shag his customers, blah blah blah.

* * *

><p>Today was a somewhat cool autumn day, barely slipping into the brink of winter. Nevertheless, people continued to buzz about the streets like hummingbirds to hidden flowers, just lollygagging about with no important business or agendas. Albeit, there weren't a lot of people in the town to begin with, but this is what they considered to be busy. Among a few stragglers chatting against a nearby building walked a young man whose hair fluttered like a blizzard in the breeze. He shuffled along on his way to work, his blue hoodie clinging to him like a child, while his khakis danced along with his movements. The few people in front of him eyeballed him, some confused, others intrigued. He even heard one girl some spaces ahead of him mutter to her chum, "Oh my gosh, did you see that cute guy with the white hair?!"<p>

He didn't really care though, he had his headphones on playing some crap on Pandora radio he liked.

"Hey!" A voice called out amid the minuscule chaos.

He kept walking, passing in front of a cafe that glowed amber and wafted the scent of fresh coffee beans.

"Hey Jack!" It called again, this time closer.

Pulling down the frosted blue headphones to around his neck, he turned around to see an 11 year old boy trotting towards him, a cap resting snugly around his cranium and a smile plastered upon his face.

"Hey Jamie!" Jack immediately threw back a beaming grin, tossing away his neutral gloom in favor of something more inviting.

The boy finally caught up to him, letting out a 'whew' as he slumped a bit, resting his hands on his hips.

"Geez Jack, I finally caught ya! You move too fast!" Jaime joked, catching his breath.

"Hey kid, you're young. You should be faster than me, I think you need to work out more."

Jack jokingly poked at Jamie's belly, as if he had a bit of girth there. The boy just giggled as he swatted away the blatant hand, as they started to pick up their pace, moving towards an unannounced goal.

"Wait a minute... Shouldn't you be in school?" Jack looked down to his left at him, stuffing his chilled hands in the hoodie's

pockets.

"Nah, I can't go today, I got a doctor's appointment." Jaime responded, looking down as he kept up with Jack's steady gait.

"Well, hey look at the bright side." Jack said as the boy glanced up in his direction, "Maybe the doctor can do something about your fat head!"

"Hey!" Jaime nudged the older boy with his shoulder, trying to sound angry, but his slipping smile started to give him away.

After a few chuckles, and a couple more steps past an alleyway, the duo was almost three-fourths of the way there.

"Uh, Jack? Can I ask something?" Jaime broke out into the silence that previously enveloped them.

"Uh, sure kid. Shoot." Jack shot a questioning glance over at his young companion.

"Have you ever had this feeling that something is going to happen, but you just don't know what?"

Well this morning was heading towards an interesting destination, away from the typical norm to a light rain of confusion.

"What, err, what do you mean?"

"Well, it's not a good feeling, but it's not bad either. Just sorta in between I guess."

"What? So you mean like a change?"

"Yeah, I guess. I mean, I just have this feeling that something's gonna change. Hmm..."

Jaime looked off into the distance, question wriggling on the tip of his tongue, while it seated itself tightly into the mindset of the white-headed young man. A change? What sort of change could there possibly be? Perhaps like the winds change the delicate balance of nature, or maybe the birth and/or death of a soul? The question danced among his brain cells, dragging him into the unknown, venturing into his very spirit in search of light among the confused and conflicted darkness. It was amazing how such a simple question from an innocent being can leave us wandering ourselves, searching for the answers we are afraid to learn, and if we already had the answers, we were left trying to find the questions they belonged to.

"Uh... Jack?"

The soft voice broke off the train of thought that seemed to have no destination and ran in complete circles.

"Hmm? Oh!" Jack turned to Jaime, whom of which stared back at him with an arching brow of concern.

"Maybe you should stay away from the shop for a while, the fumes are

getting to your head!" Jaime joked as he dashed forward into a small crowd, with a wave and a smile before disappearing among them like dreams into reality.

Jack looked around a little lost for the moment. He pinched his face slightly as a thought popped into his head. Did, did Jaime just screw with his mind? Well there was another term for that, but he didn't want to use that term when it comes to little boys. Just ahead the gleaming sign of his occupation flew high above his head, like a pink cloud among the shit storm. In intricate letters and airbrushed scenery said the name "Northern Lights," covered in fluorescent blues and greens, yellows and reds.

Jack silenced his iPhone, which was still playing music unbeknownst to him, as he quickened his pace somewhat and finally made his way into the parlor.

* * *

><p>"Oi! Finally, mate! What took ya so long?" Said a gray-haired Aster, wiping his hands with a tattered purple kerchief. The man walked directly in front of him, arms crossed while giving his signature look of nastiness to the frosty lad.<p>

"Oh, Bunny! Leave the boy be, I'm sure he has a good reason." Said Anna, as she clicked away on her keyboard, never looking up from the screen. Aster's full name was actually E. Aster Bunnymund, which a good amount of people laughed about. Well, that is until he stared them down with his powerful set of green eyes.

"Whoa, okay. For one thing, I've told you multiple times not to call me that. And for another thing, Frostbite here was almost 10 minutes late!" He gestured with the rag for emphasis.

"Not even! Only 5 minutes at most, Bunny Boy!" Jack snapped at him, pulling the hoodie over his head, revealing the striped tank top underneath.

"Aha! So you admit it! What's your excuse this time, Ice Pop?"

"Look here, you egg-sucking pain in the-"

"Jack! So nice of you to finally show up!" A Russian voice bellowed from behind.

All eyes shifted to the voice's direction, already knowing who it was.

"Oh, hey North." Jack murmured as he placed his beloved item on the coatrack near the door.

Aster mumbled, stuffing away the kerchief into his back pocket as he made his way into the backroom, concealed by a decorative curtain.

"Look North, I'm sorry-" Jack started to explain, rubbing the back of his neck.

"Is okay Jack. I understand. Just try to be on time tomorrow, hmm?"

He cut in with a sugary smile, his strong blue irises watching the young man with never-ceasing glee.

All doubt was shoved out the way upon seeing such a kind display of affection from a man Jack considered to be a father-figure. With a nod from both men, North gestured to a man to follow him into the back, so he could have his turn under the sharp needle. The man looked a little nervous, as he hesitatingly followed the large Russian like a lost kitten behind the curtain. Jack watched, interest peaked at seeing this, or at least hearing the man scream.

Curiosity yanked him towards the spectacle, when a light tug on his wrist caught him. Jack turned around to see a perky, platinum blonde female with dark eyeliner, wearing a Sex Pistols t-shirt along with short-shorts and boots to match. Ooo, what have we here? Okay, forget about that dork behind the curtain, who's this?

"Can I help you?" Jack put on his sexiest smirk, making his voice come out as smooth as brandy.

She returned the look, letting go of his wrist delicately, "Um, yes I would like to get a tattoo right here."

She lifted up the back of her shirt lightly, pointing to the blank canvas that was her lower back.

He nodded, admiring the soft flesh, "Any idea of what you want?"

Jack was still checking out the space, curling an inquisitive finger underneath his chin as if in deep thought.

"I was thinking a tree branch, with little cherry blossoms on it." She said, pulling down the cloth as she turned to face him.

He maintained his position, pretending to run the idea over in his head. On the contrary, he didn't give two-flying-fucks of what tattoo she wanted, all he knew was that she wanted a tramp-stamp and he was more than happy to do it.

"Hmm... Okay, do you have a picture you want me to use?" Jack inquired, borderline between dirty thoughts and getting the job done, running a hand through his hair.

"Uh. Wait a minute..." She said pulling a folded picture out of her pocket. "Yeah. Right here."

Jack plucked the small square from her extended fingertips, unfolding it to reveal a detailed drawing of a twisted branch, and soft blossoms blooming right before him.

"Did you already talk to Anna about payment and all that?"

"Mmmhmm. "

"Yeah, okay! Just take a seat over there, and I'll get this baby ready!" He motioned his hand to a nearby chair.

She took her sweet time walking over, sashaying her round backside

with an innocent smile, immediately catching the young man's eye. Taking her seat, she crossed one curvaceous leg over the other, batting eyelashes as she folded her fingers in her lap. Oh boy. Jack wasn't stupid, he could take the hint. And _oh_ _man_, she was dropping them like breadcrumbs for him to follow.

"I'm getting lucky tonight!" Jack sang in his head as he headed to the backroom.

In the back behind the curtain, the shop had four chairs set up like a classroom, while in the corner was the drawing room, where the pictures were set, a small space in comparison to the rest of the room.

Jack made his way over, paper in hand, as he passed a few occupied chairs. At one of them, sat the nervous-looking man, now bug-eyed as North scrawled in the ink across his left shoulder. On the opposite side, to the right, sat the stout Sandy sketching a complicated koi fish on the upper back of a 30 year old woman. Aster was nowhere to be seen, so he was probably in the lounge, behind yet another curtain on the wall opposite of the drawing room.

"Hey Sandman." Jack motioned with a slight wave to the Buddha-esque man.

Sandy returned a simple grin, along with a quick wave before he stopped to clean his needle and the woman's flesh. As Jack opened the door to the small room, the man under North let out a squeal and whimper, eliciting a small bout of giggles from the workers.

"Yep, I remember my first tattoo." Jack said to himself, reminiscing the first time the black ink made contact to him. It sure as hell wasn't an enjoyable experience, but luckily it was North who did it for him, and not Aster. Because if it was old Bunny Boy, Jack would now be wearing a crudely drawn penis on his arm instead of North's Celtic snowflake. He glanced over at the snowflake tat in question, and it stared back at him as a fond memory.

Instead of tracing it, he decided to use the thermal-fax instead, to save him some time so he could get back to ogling the blonde. Carefully putting in the picture and carbon paper for transfer, and making sure everything was set correctly, he pressed the print button on the little machine that worked unannounced wonders. Jack listened to the noisy hum and clink of the mechanism, until he heard the paper slide out along with a clunk signaling the fax was done. He took a look at the picture, clean and lifelike, turning out much nicer than him tracing.

The blue-eyed youth grabbed the sheet with care as he slinked his way out, and carefully peeked out behind the curtain. She was still there, thumbs jabbing into her phone's keyboard, noisily texting the day away.

"Uh, hey." Jack called out.

Slightly startled she looked up at him, clicked three more buttons before popping the phone back into her pocket, and stood gracefully like a pampered starlet (more like a porn star, in my opinion).

"You ready?" He asked, while she stepped closer into his proximity,

breasts bouncing a bit like an excited schoolgirl.

"You bet!" She cooed back.

Jack pulled back the curtain allowing her to enter the work space. He looked over to his coworkers to see that North was trying to calm the flinching fellow and his half-done picture, while Sandy was already done with the incredibly detailed ink on the neutral-faced woman.

"Okay, just sit down right here." He motioned to a chair in front of North.

"Don't you have something a bit more, hmm... Private?" She purred the last word, like some large cat lulling her prey into a false sense of security.

"Well, ah, there's a room back there, if you want." He gulped a small amount of dry air, the word 'private' leading to all sorts of conclusions and possible outcomes.

Jack pointed to a door in the middle of the wall in directly in front of them, amongst two other doors on both sides, for customers who wanted a little privacy from peering eyes.

"Perfect!" She exclaimed with a giddy kick in her voice. If she didn't seem like a porn star before, she certainly did now.

He led her past the two men, North wagging his eyebrows at him while Sandy gave him a quick wink, and she clung to his side like some paid mistress of the night. Once the door popped open with a tiny crack and the light switch flipped with a click, the atmosphere shifted to something much more intimate.

The chair looked more like a massage table than a regular run-of-the-mill bench, suited out in a lush purple, invoking a hidden lust into anyone who looked at the color. The pinup poster of a nude woman on the back wall didn't help either.

"Okay just take a seat there, and let me get everything." He gestured to the area, while grabbing the needed supplies from the nearby table.

On the dark, chestnut desk sat a case full to the brim of colorful inks in their separate tubes, and the needles prepped for the impending work ahead. The desktop also contained some rubbing alcohol, disposable razors, soaps, etc. Right next to the desk, hidden against the wall, dwelled a small sink which couldn't be seen from the doorway.

"Could you lift up your shirt, please?" He inquired, feeling somewhat awkward about the request, albeit it was necessary.

She complied, peeling away the material from her flesh, yanking it up far enough to expose her upper back as well as her brassiere. Pulling on a pair of black latex gloves, Jack then plucked a fluffy white cotton ball and doused it with some alcohol to clean his canvas from any small-scale obstructions. Once the singeing liquid contacted her skin in a cold embrace, she hissed slightly, but allowed him to carry on. He then produced a small, plastic razor to clear off any fine

hairs from the workspace, even though none were visible. This was the moment when he felt important; when he could shape the paper to suit the pen; when he could choose the clay to fit the sculpture; when the canvas was set, ready for his paintbrush to bring it to life. And he hasn't even started yet. Once done, he cleaned the spot once more, rubbing in small circles to calm the nerve-struck epidermis.

"So have you been doing this a long time?" Her voice struck out into the silence, shattering the sensual calm.

"Hmm? Oh, well, uh. Not very long, actually. Maybe a year or two." Jack flipped his gaze towards her head, before returning to the spot, which he started moisturizing with water. Once completed with the prep work, he applied the transfer paper to the tattoo's permanent home, pressing it until he peeled it away to reveal a purplish-blue outline.

"It's looking good so farâ€¦ uh. Umm, I didn't quite catch your name?" The thought finally slipped into his thick head. He was already planning how the rest of the night was going to go, and yet it completely slipped his forsaken mind this one crucial detail.

"Flora. I should've told you when we met. I mean, you're gonna be putting a needle in my back, for god's sake! So, your name's Jack, right?" The previously nameless woman finally announced, with an added hand gesture or two for emphasis.

"Yeah, Jack. But the folks 'round here have the tendency to call me Jack Frost. You heard of me?" He made his way around the chair, back to the desk so he could grab the essentials.

"Yep. Someone from back home got a tat from over here once and told me about this cute guy with white hair. I'm going to assume that would be you?" Flora said with a wink.

"I guess so, since the only other person here with white hair would be North. Unless you're talking 'bout him, right?" Jack smirked over his shoulder, before turning back around to start preparing the tattoo machine. He started placing the needed inks into little cups, or ink caps, and then removed the needles and tubes from their sterile pouches to be placed in the machine.

"Maybe, I mean Santa Claus out there sure does look good in this lighting." She stated, creating a silent round of giggles from the both of them.

"So where you from?" Jack scooted over to the sink, filling a small cup with water for cleaning the needles.

"I moved to Nevada a while ago, but I'm from a little town in the Faroe Islands, between the U.K. and Iceland." Flora smiled nostalgically.

"Whoaly shit! Dude, you're a long way from home!" He plopped a tiny tub of Vaseline on the counter for her.

"Yeah, it's a little place called Berk. Cold as hell, but its home."

"You here on vacation, or what?" He leaned against the counter, crossing his arms across his chest and looking straight at her.

"Nah. I'm here with my cousins and some friends of theirs. We're here seeing off a friend, he just moved to the city. That poor dragon boy needed some help adjusting, so we decided to pay him a visit."

'Dragon boy?' Slipped into his skull. But he would ask that in a minute, there was work to be done.

Jack motioned for her to slip into a comfortable position, so she rolled over onto her stomach in the chair, the model ready to be sketched. The cover was stripped away from the paper, the pencils were ready for action, and the artist could now bring his art to life. She looked more like a beach goer though, with her arms resting beneath her chin, and back exposed.

Oh, oh geez. Jack had to mentally slap himself out of his hormonal trance from seeing her like this, especially since he could see a portion of her knickers. He smacked a good glob of ointment onto the area and rubbed it in, for Flora's comfort and to make his job easier. The machine was ready, so he handled his needle cautiously; it was time to prove his worth.

The buzzing instrument vibrated lightly between his fingertips as the first line was traced, the first of many to follow.

She groaned at the odd feeling, comparable to a dancing bee sting across the skin cells, splitting her nerves down the middle in the process.

"So... Dragon boy?" Jack wanted to ease her into it, trying some conversation to make the moment more tolerable as he continued to scrawl in the ink.

"Hmm?" Flora hummed, and followed with a hiss.

"Sorry, you should get used to it in a minute. And you said 'dragon boy' earlier, what's that supposed to mean?"

"Heh, it's just a little nickname we got for him, except we don't use it very often. We started -ow- calling him that when we were kids. He is absolutely obsessed with dragons!"

"Yeah?" He was tracing a flowering bud.

"Yep, the little dweeb has a good lot of dragon tattoos all over him. I think one on each arm, and on his back. I mean, these aren't little drawings, they're freaking _gigantic_!"

"Where'd he get them?"

"From a shop back home." Her accent slipped out slightly, so she cleared her throat to force it back down. "Th-the place is called Gobber's, it's where I got my first tattoo. Actually the Dragon Boy worked there as an artist for a while."

Now he was a little intrigued. Who exactly was this Dragon Boy? After

a few steady minutes, the tracing was complete; a fine outline of the branch blossoming before him and now was the moment to be creative. It should've taken him a lot longer but his ability to get things done in half the time was one of his secret skills.

"So, he just moved here right?" Jack cleaned off the needle before dipping it into a dark brown pigment in one of the caps.

"Yeah." Flora relaxed, the pressure on her lower back fading into an odd, sharp numbness.

"Where exactly?" His pen glided along the twisted curves, shading the edges with practiced precision.

"Uh, let me think... Oh, yeah. It's an apartment complex four blocks up from here. I think it's called...hmmmm... what was it? The-the Mayfair! That was it! The Mayfair."

That was a name Jack heard before. He knew it because the building, along with a majority of the businesses in Burgess, was owned by some big corporate company in the middle of town.

"The Mayfair, huh? That place is pretty nice. I live in the apartments two blocks down from here." He cleaned off the color and switched to a hue similar to terra cotta.

They stayed silent for a moment, the only noise being the buzzing needle which sounded like a beehive hidden in the room.

"So, you guys gonna stay here a while? You and your friends, I mean." Jack asked, swirling the brown against the darker color to form an almost complete branch.

"They are, I'm actually leaving tomorrow." Flora turned her head slightly to look at him from the corner of her vision.

"Oh, ok. So where you heading?" Well, his plans were just tossed out the window and lit on fire. Along with his dream of a hot one-night stand.

"I have school, so I have to head back." She rubbed the corner of her eye, unaware of what she did to the boy who apparently couldn't keep it in his pants.

The conversation slowly died over time, since the prospect of Jack getting laid was shot point-blank, and seemed to smother any words he had left. The painting was nearing completion, the branch now fully formed as the flowers took shape with bright cherry and fuchsia hues. With the quick flick of the wrist, the final detail was applied and the magic spell he cast became reality. No longer was it some picture in the back pocket of a teenybopper's shorts, now it was a full blown concoction of whimsy and creativity. He had to admit, even though he didn't care what image she wanted in the beginning, he swelled with pride at seeing his own completed work smiling back at him in rich detail, like a reflection of his soul.

"Oookay, and we are done!" Jack stood at his full height, stretching out his arms behind his back with a few pops.

"How's it look?" Flora sat on her posterior as she clutched her

bunched shirt in the front to keep it away from the sore, color coated wound.

Only one word came to his aid, "Sexy."

"Yeah?" She turned to look at the young man, a slight pink dusting across her nose and cheeks.

"Yeah, wanna look?" He motioned to the floor-length mirror on the wall.

She stood, stretching out her muscles with a groan, both from exhaustion and pain. He backed up so she could have some room. With a turn and a tug, she eyeballed the tattoo over her shoulder.

"Oh my gods." Flora murmured.

Jack felt his stomach sink a bit.

"Wow. I just- holy shit dude! This is amazing!" She stammered with a glowing grin enveloping her countenance.

Nothing could describe the warm feeling that grew in his being with every pump of his heart. His smile beamed back at her, a glistening white, at the woman who recognized his ability and talent.

"Oh hey, could I take a picture of it for my portfolio?" He shook himself out of the pride-fueled daze as he glanced over at his neglected camera resting on the table.

"Yeah, sure. Go ahead." Flora said turning around to look at him, the smile still evident on her peach lips.

The young man took a two long steps before he stretched out and grabbed it square off the space, messing with the buttons and lens.

"Okay. Just hold your shirt up so I can get a clean shot." He moved behind her as the device made itself comfortable in front of his eye.

Doing as she was told, she held the cloth in a pair of tight fists that remained close to her chest like a frightened child. The lens of the mechanism came in and out of focus between his withered fingers. A blue eye focused intently as the blurry image came into view while the other eye closed itself tightly as if it were sewn shut.

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The sound, though small, shook him back into reality. Jack removed the camera from its setting and held it far out in front of him. A smooth image flowed through the light to meet him: a pixelated view of the artist's devotion.

"What do you think?" The youth flipped the digital instrument over so the screen was facing his customer.

"Damn, Jack. I-I just can't, wow. Thank you so much." Flora let her exposed skin be covered once again as the black material fell from

her grip, providing a new sense of warmth against the chilled flesh. She wrapped her arms around his shoulders in a light hug as she placed a chaste kiss to his left cheek.

"Uh, ahem, you are welcome. But I'm not finished just yet, still gotta bandage it up." A shy grin grew on his lips, bright against the growing red of his face. This was the sort of affection he wasn't used to. It made him feel like a high schooler who finally discovered romance. The white-haired teen had become accustomed to loose people in search for quickies; those who weren't afraid to state what they wanted or stick a tongue in a stranger's mouth. In all honesty, the only word that could describe the feeling it gave him was giddy. Alas, this was never meant to last, and the thought put a grim grip on his chest. It wasn't the girl that gave him this feeling. It was the motion in general. He adored cutesy moments like this, contrary to everyone else's belief.

"Of course." She let her arms fall and backed up a pace.

Jack scooted over to reach for some protective ointment and bandages meant to be applied to the fresh ink, in one of the table's drawers. He motioned for her to move the shirt out of the way once again, rubbing in the bacteria-killing lotion before adding the white gauze and some tape to keep it in place; all done in a cinch. The clock on the wall ticked above their (air-filled) heads and greeted them with the time, saying only about an hour had passed during the entire ordeal. Geez, time sure does fly when you're being baited by some foxy harpy, only to have her shut you down.

"And here are the aftercare instructions." The lad pulled a small notepad from his pocket alongside a blue pen. With nimble fingers, he pressed it against the wall as he wrote down what to use, what to avoid, how long she should keep the bandage on, etc.

"Okay, first thing..."he began.

* * *

><p>Both North's and Sandy's patrons had left, the woman glowing with absolute delight while North's bug-eyed fellow looked like he had fought in 'Nam.<p>

"Bunnymund, where are you?" Bellowed the Santa Claus doppelg nger as he cleaned around his workstation.

He turned to Sandy, who shrugged in response before hopping down from his perch and ventured out beyond the curtain, into the front of the shop with Anna. North tossed some paper towels and a disposable razor into a mini plastic trashcan tucked away in the corner of the room, all the while letting out a long sigh as he rubbed the back of his neck.

"Where is man when I need him, eh?" He huffed as he checked behind the curtains for a sign of the grey-haired Australian.

He peaked into the front, to be greeted by the sight of a few customers flocking in and talking to Anna or Sandy, so he moved over to the lounge to see that it was void of any life. Aster couldn't have been in one of the private rooms, since North would've seen him go in.

"He better not be doing what I think he is doing..." The man mumbled to himself as he went through the lounge to the door that led outside.

With a hearty shove, the metal door gave way and allowed the brisk air to surround him in a quick blast before settling to a cool breeze. That didn't faze him though. He was more focused on the burning scent of tobacco that wafted against his face and stung his nose.

"Bunnymund!" North called out as he closed the door and searched for the man at the back of the alley. In the shadows near a trio of garbage cans, an accented voice hissed an 'oh shit!' before flicking a cigarette on the ground and snuffing it out with his shoe. The shady figure then coughed the remaining smoke out of his lungs, waving a hand to disperse the toxic clouds. A grey head and a pair of green eyes stepped forward in to view cautiously, like a child under the scrutinizing gaze of their teacher.

"Oh, h-hey North." Aster sputtered and coughed on the last word.

The large Russian responded by staring him down under a powerful set of blue eyes and crossing his thick arms across his chest.

"Hello Bunny. What-ah, what are you doing back here?"

"Nothing." He folded his arms behind his back, covering his pack of cigarettes.

"You know you are supposed to be working, yes?"

"Uhh, yeah. I, ah, I came out for a bit of air, ya know?"

"Bunnymund, you know I've told you thousand times, you shouldn't be smoking. Especially when on the job."

"Aw come on North. It's just one gasper. It ain't gonna do anything." The man slipped his hidden carton of tobacco filled treasure into his back pocket before letting his arms fall to his sides in defeat.

"No. I have told you and will tell again. No smoking around the shop. Is not good, and makes the customers sick. Besides, I thought you said you quit." North rubbed an exhausted hand against his face.

"I did, but this is just a onetime thing. I needed it to help calm me down is all. The little Snowflake is getting on my nerves again. Would you rather I have a puff out here to cool me off, or me smacking him upside the head?"

"Fine! Fine. Just stop doing it around where I can catch you, okay? And leave Jack be, he is trying his best."

"Wh-what? Trying his best? He doesn't even have the decency to show up on time! You need to stop covering for him." Aster gestured to the boy inside and the large man with an extended hand, pointing an accusing finger.

"Eh, I have my reasons. Just get inside and get back to work." North sighed before cracking open the door once again and stepping in out of the chilled weather. All the while, Aster glared at the ground, rubbing the back of his neck. He was beyond glad North was so lenient, especially since this isn't the first time this happened.

* * *

><p>"So you got all that right?" Jack asked the female standing next to him as they made their way out of the private room.<p>

"Yep, I should be good. Thanks again for everything." Flora tucked his instructions away in her pocket, before giving him a slight squeeze around the shoulder.

"Yeah! No problem, it's been a pleasure." He smirked over at her, a gleam shining out his eye.

He shifted over to allow her out first, surreptitiously eyeballing her backside as she sashayed out past the curtain and into the front, him following suit.

Flora waved and said a quick goodbye to the workers, before exchanging a quick hug with her tattoo artist.

"Oh, and by the way Jack. The 'Dragon Boy' and his friends are gonna be dropping by tomorrow." She whispered to the lad after she let go.

"Really?" His interest became peaked once again.

"Yeah, but I came in today 'cause I wanted to see it first." She said as she stepped towards the entryway.

"So wait. What's his name?" Jack stopped her before her hand could push open the door.

"Wwweeeelll, I don't wanna say. I kinda wanna leave a bit of mystery. It's more fun." She said with a smirk.

"Okay, fine. So what does the 'mysterious' Dragon Boy look like?" He laughed a little.

"Why do you wanna know so much?"

"Hey! I'm curious. A fresh face into the city, and he worked at a tattoo shop! Come on, he might have some trade secrets or some junk."

"Yeah, sure." A bit of sarcasm laced her words. "Trust me, you'll know him when you see him. He's got those massive dragon tattoos of his, remember?"

"That's not very-"

"Well that's all you're getting." She pulled open the door, letting its cool breeze enter and bring down their temperatures. "And thanks for everything Jack, it's been fun." Flora pecked him on the cheek and walked out, from both the parlor and the young man's unspoken affection.

* * *

><p>The rest of the day passed like a dream, filled with a few more patrons and the endless buzzing of the needles before the sky darkened into a rich plum mixed with gloomy grey clouds expanding over the horizon. Since no one came in for a long while, North decided to close shop up early, much to young Jack's delight.<p>

"Oh Jack, could you sweep up for me please?" North said to the boy across from him in the lounge. Toothiana sat on the couch with Sandy, chittering away since the little man couldn't respond (nor complain) while Aster leaned against the wall, staring off into complete nothing with a burning glare. Geez, perhaps this guy should consider picking up a doobie instead of cigarettes.

"Yeah, sure thing." Jack stretched as he moved over to the back wall, grabbing a well-worn broom complete with dustpan.

"I'm gonna go ahead and get going, see you lot tomorrow." Aster yawned, scratching his neck and moving out of the room towards the front.

"Bye Bunny!" Anna called after him, to which he groaned loudly as the front door was opened and closed.

Sandy hopped off the couch, waving a goodbye to the colorful female along with the two white-haired males.

"Aww, ya leaving too Sandman?" The bubbly woman cocked her head at him.

He nodded, passing through the curtain and eventually the front entrance.

"Well, in that case, I'm going too I guess. See you fellas tomorrow!" She stood with a bounce, waving before she disappeared as well.

"I guess that means it's just you and me, North." Jack looked over to the large man, broom stilled.

"No, just you." North headed towards the exit.

"H-hey!"

"Sorry Jack. I've got things to do, you understand, yes? I trust you'll lock up?" The man called as he moved from the lounge, past the work area into the front, holding open the door halfway.

"Sure, fine, whatever." The boy waved him off as if he were swatting away a fly.

The door closed with a jingle from the bell atop it, letting the silence consume the once busy parlor.

"Yeah, this is great. Leave me all alone in the place. Sure, why not? Go ahead! It's fine, it's not like we might get robbed or some shit. Yep, it's a great idea." Sarcasm drawled out of his pale lips as he swept around the area.

A steady rhythm was built, going from one side of the room to the other, as the clock ticked away on the wall. It was somewhat peaceful for a couple of minutes, before a lurching pain settled in. The silence mixed in with the broom's bristles scratching against the floor became overbearing with every pump of blood; the simple quietness shifting into a horrific, sadistic killer waiting for a chance to strike. He could feel it ring in his ears, pounding against his psyche like a thief of sanity. Jack always had a fear of this quietness, it held so many atrocious meanings behind it. It meant anything bad could happen in a flash. It meant old memories and thoughts could come crashing like waves to the bridge of his mind. But most of all, it meant he was all alone, and that was his greatest phobia.

Jack felt a pump of panic rush through his veins in an instant at the very thought. 'Alone' bled into the mixture like black ink against the serene white paper that was this moment. It felt horrific settling in the pit of his stomach, practically a form of vomit-inducing herbal drug. He wanted to drop the broom and dash for an available exit to be able to breathe in some cold air, since the air in the room began to feel tighter in his throat somehow. All shadows seemed to stretch and grow before his eyes, the epinephrine in him making the dark creatures scratch and growl at him with every blink.

A loud slam from a car door shook him out of this state of paralysis (since he stopped and stared at nothing in that moment), causing a gasp to escape his lips before stretching out in to an exasperated sigh.

"Son of a bitch! It's too freakin' quiet in here!" Jack snapped at no one in particular.

He reached into his pocket and pulled out his iPhone in its icy azure case, typing in the password and scrolling through the applications as quick as his fingers would let him. There on the screen shining like a sign of God himself was an orange square labeled 'Music.' Pressing the shuffle button and cranking up the volume, the area was immediately filled with the high -pitched wail of whatever song it was set to. Relief swept over him like a hot shower as Starry Eyed by Ellie Goulding started playing, soothing his nerve-struck soul with her soft voice calling out to him and casting away the silence with its hidden creatures. The boy quickened his pace, shoving all collected dirt into the dustpan and dumping it in the nearest trash bin before shuffling over to the work space.

"Oh, everybody's starry eyed..." He sang in a hushed tone inaudible next to her blaring voice located in his pocket. Before he knew it, he started adding some movement to his monotonous sweeping rhythm. He made small circles across the floor, collecting dirt in the process, while unknowingly shaking his hips in minuscule movements. The youth began to mouth her words, shifting to the beat as he danced in rotations with his inanimate partner, a.k.a. the broom. A cheeky grin formed on his face as he spun one final circle at the ending, dipping the handle with gusto. The dust was quickly swept into the pan and discarded while Radioactive by Imagine Dragons came to play. Jack slid into the front, bopping his head once the beat started up. He mouthed the lyrics with emphasis, lip-syncing precisely to the singer and added at slight fist pump or two just for the hell of it.

"Whoa-ho, hey! We having a dance party?" Someone called out from the doorway.

"What the in the shit?!" Jack dropped his tools before flipping around to see a girl entering the shop.

"Geez, Frosty, I know for a fact that you can dance better than that." She cooed and crossed her arms.

"Oh! Jesus-fricken-Christ, Baby Tooth! I thought you were a prowler or some shit." He ran a hand down his face, eyeballing the intruder.

The young woman, a few years older than Jack (yet a couple feet shorter), stared him down with a smirk. Although her real name was Beatrice, she earned the moniker 'Baby Tooth' because of her relation to Toothiana. Or more so for the reason she wanted to become a dentist and was utterly fascinated by teeth, just like her aunt.

"Yeah, I came to shank you in the butt and take your lunch money." She moved closer and into full view.

You would think she was a younger version of Anna, since the two looked almost exactly the same. Baby Tooth's hair varied in its green, blue and yellow hues, mixing together beautifully in her short haircut. Her outfit consisted of torn, black skinny jeans covered in white polkadots and a loose chartreuse shirt that hung off her left shoulder, completed with a pair of peacock feather earrings dangling from her petite ears.

"Why in the butt?" Jack picked up the fallen items and silenced the phone still blaring music from his pocket.

"Cause that's the best place to shank!" she poked him in the side with a giddy smile, light bouncing off her amethyst eyes illuminated by pink eye shadow.

"Yeah, okay. Whatever floats your boat, I guess." The white-haired lad continued to sweep around the area, reaching underneath one of the chairs.

"Well, are ya done yet?" She watched him as he moved behind the front desk.

"Almost. Why?"

"Cause we're going out, remember?"

"Out where, dare I ask?" He lazily peered in her direction.

"Holy molars, Jack! Remember? We had plans, to go to that new club that just opened?" Her voice squeaked as she gaped in disbelief. Gosh, did he have the memory of a rock or what?

"Oh-OH! Crap, sorry. Just slipped my mind."

With a sigh, Baby Tooth leaned against the wall and smiled sadly at the ground, "Frosty, I swear, if your head wasn't attached you'd

forget that too."

"More than likely." He scooped the remaining pile of dust and dirt into the pan and tossed it in the garbage.

"Yeah, well, ya better hurry up. 'Cause I invited some of the girls, and I don't wanna keep 'em waiting."

"Oh fan-freakin-tastic. Your little harem of cackling hens."

"Aw, come on. They're your friends!"

He turned sharply and pointed a long finger at her, "No, nononono. They're YOUR friends, I'm just the jackass you drag along."

"Well, you are a jackass." A smug grin formed on her glossy lips.

"You-you know what I mean." He walked back into the lounge to deposit the cleaning utensils.

"Can we go now? I've been waiting all day, Snowball." An exaggerated sigh slipped out her mouth.

Jack returned, walking out the curtain while wiping any remnants off his hands on the sides of his pants, "Yeah, just let me lock up, ya little Tooth Fairy."

The shop's keys dangled on a small hook near the front desk, glimmering like silver switchblades ready for the attack. With a flick of the fingers, the boy knocked them off their perch and into his waiting palm with a jingle. Baby Tooth bounced giddily out the front door as Jack grabbed his beloved hoodie and jabbed one of the multiple keys in the lock, turning and clicking it into its nightly security. As he tugged them out, he realized something: **he** had the keys. As in, **HE** would have to get up a little earlier than usual to open the parlor, since this was the only set and North usually took them.

"Sonofabitch." He said to himself, as his partner-in-crime yanked his arm harshly and ushered them up the street. You know, for a little bird, she sure had a grip.

* * *

><p>They stalked past some middle-aged couples (who would look at them funny), a few teenagers, and even a few ladies of the night before crossing several blocks and spotting a large crowd forming in front of a building. It was chock-full of youngsters dressed in ripped shorts, clingy shirts and excessive jewelry, practically a rainbow of idiocy. A mammoth sign with the name 'La Luna' in a neon fuchsia light called out the masses like a hot flame to the colorful moths. The sign also had a giant, full moon staring back at them against the plain, brick building. Looking back at its bright face, Jack felt a tinge of nervousness climb into his stomach. It glared at him, scrutinizing him under a set of invisible yet powerful eyes; it could read him like a book and scanned through every dumb choice and mistake he made like some sort of failure catalog. Although the moon brought him some comfort on lonely nights, it also came with a sense of dread he couldn't wish away. Even this artificial moon gave him

mixed feelings, much more negative than he originally thought. Amidst the unrelenting chaos of fun-seeking partygoers and the never-ceasing flow of booze, for once in his young life, Jack just felt so out of place underneath that painted moon.<p>

"Jack? Jack?... Yo Frost-Butt!" Baby Tooth's squeaky voice cut through the late night chit-chat.

"Hmm? What?" He blinked a couple of times to discover they were in line. Since when did they move?

"Dude, you totally spaced out." She dropped her voice to a whisper, "Are you on drugs? 'Cause if you are, you gotta share some with me."

She grinned at him like the Cheshire cat while he gave back a look that said 'that's not funny'.

"Nah, I was just thinking." A small puff of vapor flitted from his mouth into the air due to a drop in temperature.

"Well cheer up! I thought you were excited about coming here. You kept going on and on about it."

"Yeah, but it's been a long day." He rubbed the left side of his neck.

"What happened, huh?"

"Ah, it's nothing. Let's just wait."

"Come ooonnn, tell me and I'll buy ya a drink?" She poked him in the belly.

"You tempt me Madame with the promise of liquor? Well I never!-okay, I'll tell you. Some chick came in, smoking hot by the way, but she's leaving tomorrow and I never got a chance."

"Chance? Chance to what? Screw her? 'Cause that's all you do Jack." She put her hands on her hips.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Well, come ON Jack. You are quite the dandy! You pick up girls all the time, and take them back to your place then never talk to them again."

"Just what are you insinuating?"

"You're upset over one bird, when there are plenty here to choose from."

"Well, pardon! Please excuse me for thinking she was the one." He jokingly put a hand to his chest as if he were seriously offended.

"Oh, this old shit again?" Baby Tooth rolled her eyes in the opposite direction.

"Hey!"

She put a hand on his shoulder, "Jack, I hear you saying that a lot, and yet you've never had a real girlfriend."

She chucked that in his face like a flying brick. He's never had an actual girlfriend for more than a couple of weeks, even though he did pick a good sum for one-nighters.

Seeing the shocked/disappointed look on his face, she quickly added, "Look Jack, it's just like, uh... Romeo and Juliet!"

"Huh?"

"Remember from the play? Romeo falls in love with Rosaline, but she doesn't return the feelings. You just need to wait for your Juliet to come along."

"You are aware that both Romeo and Juliet die at the end, correct?"

"Y-you know what I mean!"

Before Jack could retort, the line had moved a good amount. The group ahead of them moved inside, exposing the larger-than-life bouncer in all black to the duo.

"ID please." The man watched them with dark eyes, extending a hand.

Baby Tooth slipped a small card out of her pocket and handed it to him with an unwavering smile. He glanced at it, switching his gaze from the card, to her and back.

"Okay, go ahead." The bouncer stepped to the left to allow her in the entrance.

Now it was Jack's turn, which he absolutely hated.

"ID please." The man repeated.

Unwillingly, the white-haired youth reached into his pocket for his wallet, plucking his driver's license from its secure case. With a sigh he handed it to him, watching as the man's face changed from stern to confused whilst looking at the picture. There was a good reason Jack hated his driver's license: he looked nothing like the picture. When he had gotten it, his hair was still brown as well as his eyes, and he didn't have any of his tattoos at that point.

"O-okay, go ahead." The man looked at him quizzically before stepping over and returning to his usual, brutish stance.

Jack pushed his way past some screaming morons making duck-faces and taking pictures before the place came into view. Under some hypnotic and repetitive beat, lights flashed and danced across the crescent-shaped dance floor with a circular bar set at the center against the wall. Dark, round booths suited out in leather encased the walls, filled to the brim with drinking friends or passed out dorks covered in a pool of alcohol. He carefully avoided a stumbling

couple leaning on each other as they walked past him on their way out, and scanned his eyes across the space before noticing a head of colorful hair belonging to his friend, seated at a booth.

"Oh! Jack! We're over here!" Baby Tooth spotted him coming towards the table, and waved as she tried to yell over the blaring combination of techno music and drunken fools.

The boy stepped forward to see her and her small group of girlfriends, who all gave him funny looks before returning to their squeaky chatter. Oh, it was going to be a long night.

* * *

><p>Most of the night, the girls clucked away like chickens while Jack just sipped on whatever drink Baby Tooth got for him (he was just a year shy of being able to legally purchase liquor). A few girls kept flocking to him and flirted, doing things like sitting in his lap or leaning over and exposing their cleavage to his lusty eyes, but other than that he remained quiet and uninterested. Was this because of one girl? Perhaps it was because she got away from him before he could ask anything? He couldn't really wrap his mind around it. Another addition to the problems Jack already had was that he had the tendency to fall for people easily, even if they just met. Guess he and Romeo had something in common after all.<p>

"Jack, are you okay?" His female companion leaned over and asked him.

"Hmm? Uh, y-yeah. I, ugh, I just have a little headache." He took a swig out of his beer bottle.

"Oh. Do you want me to get you something?" Some of the girls stopped talking and looked at him.

"Uh, no. It's fine. I'm just gonna go ahead and get going, okay?"

Woozy and tired, the lad stood and stretched as he got out of the cramped booth.

"Aww, you're leaving? Come on, Jack. Just stay a bit longer?" Baby Tooth cocked her head at him with concerned eyes.

"No, no, sorry. I've got work tomorrow and would prefer not going in hung over." He joked as he waved a quick goodbye to the girls who just waved him off with dirty looks planted on their faces.

"O-okay... Do you need me to walk you home?" She shouted as he got farther away.

Jack just shook his head as he stumbled towards the exit and out of view. He walked around the bouncer and the swarming crowd of happy-go-lucky young adults around the building, stepping forward until they all disappeared into memory.

His vision became a little blurry as he stalked along the streets, as the people and moving cars doubled in a slight haze; he could still hear the music pounding against his eardrums in its hypnotic and

(slightly) annoying rhythm.

"Watch it!" Some man said as Jack almost tripped near him.

It didn't quite register in his brain though, as he followed a small crowd across the crosswalk, since the lights still shined like strobing stars in his eyes. A different light caught his attention though, something soft and homey. The boy blinked a couple of times before realizing it came from a balcony far above his head, yet it's contents could still be seen.

Trying to focus, he squinted his eyes to see someone leaning over it looking at the city. From what he could tell, it was a young man (at least he thought it was) wearing brown jeans and a green hoodie. His auburn hair reflected all sorts of amber-colored light, while his pale flesh seemed to be covered in a small assortment of freckles. Jack didn't know why he was staring, maybe it was the alcohol, but he became somewhat entranced with this foreign figure. That is until the figure in question peered over in his direction. An odd tinge of nervousness climbed into his gut at the pair of eyes focused on his being, concerned and questioning. But all time seemed to stop as well, until someone called from the inside. The young man looked over towards the balcony door and headed towards it, stopping halfway to look at Jack once more before entering and leaving view.

Jack stood in place dumbfounded for a minute more, staring at where the boy had been, before coughing the accumulated phlegm from his throat and stumbling forward once again. Young Jack continued into the night, with it's bright stars being overshadowed by puffy clouds, hiding the moon as well.

2. Chapter 2

Author's Note: thank you for all the wonderful reviews. No joke guys, you made me feel special. I've been wanting to post this since Thursday, but I wanted to add more, so here it is a few days late. I have a lot cutesy shit planned down the line, we're just in the awkward phase right now. Reviews are always welcome and appreciated, so nothing rude please. If you guys have any questions, comments or concerns, you can reach me at my tumblr: .com and please excuse my crappy chapter!

Disclaimer: these characters belong to dreamworks and I don't own shit.

Thank you for reading~

* * *

><p>Ch. 2: The Boy With The Dragon Tattoos<p>

To say that Jack was hungover was an understatement, since the first thing he did after literally rolling out of bed was rush into the bathroom and dunk his head in the toilet to empty his stomach's contents. He didn't even drink that much last night, wellâ€¦ at least that's what he thought. Maybe he tossed back a few too many just to drown out the insistent drawl of Baby Tooth's little coven of bitchy birds. Whatever the case, he knew he would pay for it in the morning. And he did.

Dragging his limp form over to the sink after flushing whatever the hell came out of his mouth, he grabbed for his toothbrush and doused it in a fat glob of minty toothpaste to destroy the acrid flavor coating his tongue. His reflection in the mirror was an exact copy of how he felt: messy, crappy, and unkempt. His hair looked like a combination of bed head and amusement park rides, while his eyes were glazed over in a blank, bloodshot stare.

After scrubbing away last night's remnants with harsh scrubs strong enough to cut his gums, he basically chugged the bottle of mouthwash resting on the counter to rinse away the lingering taste. Jack had to use some willpower in order to spit it out and move towards the shower, stripping off his pajamas in the process. Whoa, wait a minute. How in the hell did he manage to get in his pjs? I think the better question would be how in God's name did he manage to get home last night? Alas, that was a question for another time, since all the drowsy lad wanted to do was crank up the cold water and dive right in.

Peeling away his clothes and tossing them across the floor, he climbed in and turned the handle halfway, immediately being covered in a waterfall of arctic rain. The frigid stream ran over his body, slipping into each crevice and adhering to his flesh like a second skin, causing a relieved sigh to slip out chapped lips. Jack fumbled while reaching around in search for a bottle of shampoo, causing him to bump his right shoulder into the tiled wall and a sharp pain to follow. Looking over at the spot in question with a blurred focus, the boy was surprised to see a nasty, greenish bruise sprawled across the area. Now how did that happen?

"Never-hic-drinking, again." He slurred out as he poured a generous amount of shampoo into a shaky palm and rubbed it into his hair.

Okay, that was a lie. Jack had told himself that multiple times, and yet never heeded his own words. Carefully rinsing the liquid out of his hair in runny, white streams, he then squirted some conditioner onto his head as well, while scrubbing himself in a flurry of soap to get rid of last night's filth.

Turning off the water and almost slipping on his way out the tub, he wrapped a loose towel around his waist before venturing back into his room. The dull white walls looked back at him as he sat down on the bed covered in disheveled, blue sheets. Glancing over to the clock on his side table, Jack leered at the time of 10:32. He thanked every god he knew (as well as North) that work didn't start until 1:00. But then again, he did have the keys, which meant he more than likely had to get going a little earlier than usual to open up shop and all that. Which probably wouldn't have bothered him all that much if the situation were under different circumstances.

Moving like a dog hit with a stun gun, the white-haired lad managed to stand and grab a pair of socks and undergarments from his dresser, slipping them on before stumbling to his closet. The outfit he chose consisted of a pair of dull jeans and a Nirvana t-shirt (including his favorite hoodie). Quite frankly, he was a little too out of it to actually give a damn about what he wore. He let out a loud groan as he headed back to the restroom to grab some deodorant, fix his hair, etc.

Once he deemed himself good enough to be seen in public, he moved on into the kitchen for some orange juice, painkillers, and whatever leftovers he made a couple of days ago. Sulking over to the fridge for a look, he examined the containers and contemplated which wouldn't make him puke; the eggs made him gag a little so he avoided those, and he couldn't even recognize what the hell that was towards the back, so he settled for a bowl of cereal instead.

"I, ugh, really need to clean out the-the fridge." He spoke to himself as he sat on a small barstool in front of the kitchen's island. Jack cracked open the little bottle of medication, popping two small pills in his mouth along with a sip of juice. He barely managed to lift a spoonful of cornflakes to his mouth when a small buzz caught his attention. Looking over to the right, he found his phone vibrating against the keys to the shop as well as the set for his apartment on the counter; the screen lit up with the bright words '**New Message**'.

Dropping the spoon back into the bowl, the youth typed in the password to see that he had received _15_ new messages, all from the one and only Baby Tooth. He cringed partially reading through each one, some from last night and a few from this morning:

'Jack, where did u go?'

'Ur missing out on all the fun!'

'Fine, just call me when u get home or something, ok?'

'R u ok?'

'Dude seriously...'

'The only reason u should b ignorin me is if ur getting laid'

'... Ur not getting laid r u?'

'U better pick up the phone!'

'Sweet Jesus, plz tell me u didn't get arrested?'

'Frosty, if somethin happened and ur not tellin me ima kick ur ass'

'No joke u lil shit'

'I haven't heard from u all night! Ur not dead r u?'

'Dickwad im getting tired of ur crap'

'Dont make me come over'

'Thats it im coming over, be prepared for an asswhoopin'

The last one being sent only a couple of minutes ago.

"Holy crap, dude! You seriously need to chill the hell out." He told the phone screen. Although Jack and Baby Tooth could be called the

best of besties, she had the tendency to worry over him as if he were a puppy that hasn't been potty trained. He was willing to bet that she'd put him on a leash if she could. He could just picture it: the girl tugging him around with a tight, spiked collar and leash, calling him her bitch. Can someone say BDSM?

About to pick up where he left off with breakfast, a loud procession of knocks pounded against the front door, accompanied by an audible 'little piece-of-shit better be in there'. When Baby Tooth said she was coming over, she meant it. Okay, there were two things he could do in this moment: 1) answer the door and be smacked silly by a tiny pair of hands, or 2) ignore her and hope she goes away, although she will come back later to kick his ass. He would lose either way, so he chose the former and braced himself for a barrage of itty-bitty fists ready to hurl themselves into his face as he stood and moved towards the door.

"Jack!" Baby Tooth pounded at the door, "I know you are in there! Come out here so I can kick your-"

"Shh! Bro, you're gonna wake the neighbors!" Jack cracked open the door and looked down to see the fuming girl. _She. Looked. Pissed_.

"Bullshit!" She shoved her way past him into the room and turned to look him dead in the eye, "You better have a good excuse for not answering me!"

Closing the door behind him, he mumbled, "Sorry, but I passed out when I got home. Didn't even know you texted me."

She stuck out her lip and narrowed her eyes, "Do you have any idea how worried I was? I thought something happened to you, dullard."

"I know, I know. I'm perfectly okay, and I'll make this up to you." He smiled at her, causing the seriousness of her countenance to falter and fade.

"Like what?" The girl crossed her arms across her chest.

"How does a movie sound? I'll pay and everything."

She seemed to run the idea over in her mind, "When?"

"Tonight, after I get off work."

"Do I get to pick?"

"Absolutely." He reached down and enveloped her in a tight hug.

Without any resistance she accepted it, wrapping her arms around his neck while placing a sisterly kiss upon his cheek, "Don't ever do this to me again, you jerk."

"I would never dream of it."

* * *

><p>Henrik 'Hiccup' Haddock liked to stick to a strict schedule when

it came to daily life. That included waking up at 7:30 to start the day, taking a shower and finishing at promptly 7:40, and getting dressed around 7:50. Feeding both himself and his feline companion, Toothless, took about 15 minutes, so his day really began around 8:10. He had kept to that schedule for many days, weeks, and months. However, today was definitely off for him.<p>

He awoke groggily around 8:45 to the sound of Toothless snoring next to his head. Instead of being in his bed, he found himself on the couch, surrounded by cardboard boxes and plastic wrap. Moving somewhere new is never an easy thing to do, especially since the boy had moved to a different country.

"Aw geez..." Hiccup mumbled as he sat up.

Looking forward he saw the wide doors of the balcony glistening with fresh rain drops. Each individual speck bounced against the glass with a wet thud before racing down in small streams, like the gods' way of bidding him good morning. It didn't feel like a good morning to him though; the grey clouds rumbled and grew in compliance to his own emotions. He had moved from his rural home filled with friends and adventure into the bustling expanse of Burgess, filled with constant danger and boundless amounts of concrete. It was unsettling for him to know that he would no longer be able to hang out with his friends, or be able to see his father everyday, or look out the window to be greeted by a typhoon of green scenery. Now the only sight he would be getting would be building after boring, monochromatic building and bright, burning lights searing their way into his corneas. Not to mention strangers looking at him.

It was the weirdest thing to happen to him since he got here: a young man with spiky, white hair staring at him like the way Toothless stares at a moth. Did he want something? Or was he completely out of his mind? Well, this would be the first time Hiccup could honestly say that a stranger was watching him, and that thought brought a slight grimace to his freckled face.

The furry, black mass next to him rolled over and blinked at him with sleepy, green eyes. The look the cat gave him reminded him of the day he found the creature. He was just a dark, skinny puffball in contrast to the piling snow when he was younger, with a fiery temper to match.

"Hiccup! We got coffee!" A girl's voice cut through his daydream like a sharp blade.

The door was pushed open to reveal his consorts who decided to accompany him on his journey: the twins Tuffnut and Ruffnut who were bickering on their way in, Fishlegs with his nose buried in a book about botany, and Astrid with a small tray of coffee cups. The only person who couldn't come help Hiccup settle in was his cousin, Snotlout, unfortunately due to an accident during football practice. While most saw this as a bad thing, Hiccup felt guilty about seeing this as a blessing in disguise since he and Snotlout were never on the best of terms.

"Hey, Astrid. So how's the weather out there?" He followed her with his eyes as she placed the items on the kitchen counter, grabbing two cups before she plopped down beside him on the couch.

"Wet and rainy, but this is sunshine compared to the weather back in Berk!" She handed a cup to him, "So how's Toothless been doing?"

"Pretty good actually. I would've thought he'd be tripping balls by now, but he's been fairly calm." He scratched underneath the black cat's chin, receiving a loud purr.

"So, what do you want to do today?"

"Remember, I said I wanted to check out that tattoo shop?"

"Flora went there yesterday, before heading back to Nevada." Ruffnut said as she flipped through a magazine and leaned against the wall. Her brother slumped down in a chair next to her, while Fishlegs continued reading in the kitchen.

"Oh, yeah." Hiccup glanced over at her, "Did she say anything about it?"

"Uh, yeah. Said she got a kicking tattoo from some cute guy with white hair." She made a face at a certain picture in the booklet.

"Whoa, wait. White hair?" He turned, full attention on her. Now, that's not something you hear everyday.

"You mean like some old dude?" Tuffnut gave his sister a look of disgust.

"No, some dude in his twenties. She said if she stayed they'd be bumping uglies by now."

"Doesn't your cousin bump uglies with everyone?" Astrid snickered.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Tuffnut leered in her direction.

"Oh come on! You know she gets around, you said it yourself!"

"Oh, yeah."

"We'll head down there around 2:00, okay?" Astrid turned back to the brunet next to her.

"Uh, yeah. Sounds great!" Hiccup gave her a quick smile and took a sip of his coffee.

* * *

><p>Jack made his way to work around 12:45, even though a strong pounding in his head kept trying to take him back home. It was like someone left a dumbbell in his skull, he could practically feel it rolling around on his brain. As he neared the shop, the figures of his coworkers all stood there waiting for his arrival clad in jackets due to the shift in weather. Toothiana wore a rain coat covered in a rainbow paisley (a hat and pair of boots to match), while Bunnymund bore a simple grey overcoat; North had his signature red fur, and Sandy carried a simple yellow umbrella.<p>

"Oi! Took you long enough!" Aster called out to the boy, "I told North we shouldn't have left you with the keys!"

"Oh, Jack sweetie, you look awful!" Toothiana reached out a hand and put it on his shoulder once he was close enough, "Are you feeling okay?"

"Yeah, yeah. I-I'm fine." Jack responded, pulling out the keys and handing them to North with a drunken demeanor.

"Good, because there is work to be done!" North chimed as he unlocked the door.

The thought of doing anything made Jack inwardly groan and want to curl into a ball somewhere dark. Hell, he was even willing to hide in a dumpster for a while. The old man opened the door and flipped the light switch, allowing everyone to come in a single filed line behind him and set to work. Aster and Sandy went to the workspace to prepare the required materials, Anna started up her computer, and North headed into the lounge to work on a few sketches, leaving Jack to his own devices. It's not like they had anything important for him to do, so he slouched over in one of the chairs, hoping something would strike him dead because that seemed so much more appealing to him than this hangover.

"Honey, are you sure you're okay?" Anna glimpsed at him from her computer screen, fingers still typing away.

"Yep. Just, ah, feeling a little sick." The migraine in his head was beginning to dull from the medication, but nevertheless it continued to nag at him like an over-zealous mother.

"Oh, do you want me to get you something?" She chirped, purple eyes glowing with concern.

"No, no, I'm fine. Thanks."

With a shrug, Toothiana set back to typing on the keyboard, her fingers dancing madly against the plastic with minuscule clicks. Jack couldn't even begin to comprehend how she could work so fast; her quick hands could easily put any text-crazed teenager to shame.

He adjusted his weary eyes over to the window, watching the rain cascade down onto the earth like little diving airplanes before collecting into miniature ponds across the sidewalk. As a child, Jack had always enjoyed the rain, because he believed it brought hope and life along with it. Every time a drop would crash into the dirt he knew something would grow and flourish there, and bask in the sweet serenity of nature's tears and life-giving light. He recalled once as a boy, he found a small seed exposed on the grass and planted it in a small pot outside his window. As storms came and went, the little seedling grew into a sprout before his mystified eyes. The rain gave him and his little seedling enough nourishment to blossom with happiness and hope. Unfortunately, that peace would never last. The youth remembered the night so clearly: a raging storm blew in with horrendous thunder and lightning, causing his precious sprout to plunge from its perch and crash into the unforgiving ground below. He couldn't save it, because the very thing that gave this plant life had also taken it away. Nature worked in mysterious ways, and he kept that in mind every time he looked to the sky. Sometimes he wondered

when Mother Nature was going to come strike him down, like she had before...

A flash of light flew across the sky, followed by the crack of thunder, shaking him out of his unpleasant reverie. The door was then pushed open by a man and woman, both covered in cold droplets, the first customers of the day.

* * *

><p>Business was going kind of slow today, since they only had a couple of people come in, not to mention everything was handled by Jack's older coworkers. So in other words, he bummed around doing nothing but play on his iPhone for almost an hour.<p>

He checked the digital clock on the wall to see the time 2:05 written in bright, red letters. Just a few more hours until 9:00, and to him it was like waiting for school to end.

The front door was opened with a jingle from the bell atop it, followed by the shuffling of shoes and a murmur of hushed voices, more than likely a few more patrons. Jack looked up from his game of Temple Run to see a pair of twins, a large boy with blond hair, and a girl with a braid. Nothing out of the ordinary.

Until another body came into view: he wore a hunter green jacket, which was unzipped slightly exposing the shirt underneath. His skin was pale and dotted with freckles, which were especially prominent across his cheeks. His brunet hair shined auburn in the low light, flipping out slightly at the ends. Yet the most noticeable feature from his vantage point was the pair of glistening green eyes, reflecting all shades of viridian. Jack didn't realize he was gawking until the person in question looked back at him inquisitively, along with the rest of the group.

"Uh, hello?" The brunet spoke up.

"I, uh, hi." Jack still seemed to be in a slight daze, "H-how can I help you guys today?" The youth stood up and advanced towards them, receiving a lecherous gaze from the females of the group.

"I-I just wanted to check out the place." The boy gave him a slightly crooked smile.

"Wow, your cousin was right. He is cute." Astrid silently cooed to Ruffnut.

The the two blond males of the party looked at him as well, Fishlegs doing so in polite, curious manner while Tuffnut gave him an unkindly once-over.

Giving them all a sly smirk and a wink, Jack said, "Well, if you guys need anything, just give me a call."

"Whoa, dude. Check out the pictures!" Tuffnut pointed to the framed pictures of tattoo sketches upon the wall.

Hundreds of different pictures stood next to each other against the paper, waiting for someone to choose them as their own. The boisterous ones were done by North, and the more cultural ones were

done by Aster; the large, complex ones were done by Sandy, while a few creative ones were done by Jack. The twins and Fishlegs moved closer to get a better view and discuss over which ones they liked, leaving Astrid and Hiccup to talk amongst themselves.

"So, are you gonna get a tattoo?" She said in a hushed tone.

"Yeah, I-I wanted to get one. But, I'm not really sure what kind I should get." Hiccup whispered back, watching the white-haired boy out of the corner of his eye. He definitely looked like the young man from last night, with the exact head of white hair and blue jacket.

"So you brought us all the way over here, and you don't know what you wanna get?"

"Well when you put it like that-"

"Hey! Uh, you! Could you help out my friend here? He doesn't know what tattoo he should get." She called out to the lad as he leaned against Anna's desk.

"Astrid! What are you?-" It was too late for Hiccup to ask, since the young man moved towards them. He could feel an odd tightness grow in his stomach, an odd combination of nervousness with a twinge of excitement. For some weird reason...

"So, what can I do for you?" He gave the duo a smile bright enough to blind.

"Could you help him decide on something? He's having trouble." She backed away to join the rest of the group, leaving Hiccup alone to face the threat of Jack's bright, blue eyes.

"So..." Jack felt a little inept underneath the boy's green gaze, "Do you have any idea of what you want?"

"Heh, not really. D-do you have any suggestions?" Hiccup could feel a slight blush working onto his cheeks. For reasons unknown to him, he felt embarrassed under the sky-colored gaze focused on him.

"I have some old sketches you could look through, uh...I didn't quite catch your name?"

"Y-you can call me Hiccup."

"I'm Jack." He gave him a quick handshake, before settling his focus on the boy's face.

He had a varying palette of soft pink and pastel peach coursing along his countenance, dotted with contrasting flecks of somber brown mostly concentrated along his nose and cheeks. A faint gap rested itself between his front teeth, which Jack could see between partially parted lips. The boy's eyes were large and bursted with color similar to the rolling hills of the countryside. Jack had seen many people in his life, but for some reason they all blanched in comparison to this awkward oddball.

Hiccup on the other hand, was lost in the strands of silvery-white hair. Each one collected into spiky wisps on top of the young man's

head, like delicate snowflakes. The hue of his eyes seemed off, like a light blue was layered over another lustrous color. His pale flesh seemed to be frosted in a thin coating of ice, due to the almost albino shade. He was one of the strangest looking fellows Hiccup had ever laid eyes on.

"Jack. Could you stop making goo-goo eyes at the customers and help him?" Toothiana spoke up from her spot nearby, earning a few sniggers from the boy's friends. How long was he staring, and why?

"So, Hiccup, I have my portfolio in the back, if you wanna take a look." He motioned towards the curtain.

"Er, sounds great!"

The cloth was pushed back and allowed the young men into a new environment. Four chairs were set up with screens set around them, each possessing a metal tray for the inks and needles. The walls were a dull navy covered in more drawings, some simple and black while others existed as full-blown works of art complete with color, along with a few posters of lovely pinup girls or foreign cars. One picture caught Hiccup's attention however: it was a mural painted on the wall against a white background, of a cathedral amongst other buildings complete with little people and a few animals. It didn't look like a normal cathedral howbeit, since it looked as if it were carved out of ice. Including that, everything else was done in rich detail, ranging from the bricks on a house to the stripes on a child's sweater. It was the first time he had ever seen something like this in a tattoo shop.

"Who did that?" He moved towards it, as Jack was grabbing a hold of his book.

"What?" Jack followed his fixed stare, "Oh, that? My boss North did that. It's supposed to be his hometown in Russia."

He returned to his portfolio, waiting for the other boy to come over for a look, but he was still transfixed on the complex scene.

"So, is this your first time getting a tattoo?" The white-haired youth questioned, not looking in the other's direction. Might as well get some conversation going, right?

"No."

"Really?"

"You wanna see?" Hiccup turned to him with an creeping grin.

Before Jack could begin to contemplate, the other male unzipped his jacket and turned around to face him fully, the article of clothing being tossed over his shoulder. On the left arm, he could see a wispy creature done in black, with wide wings crawling around his skin adjacent to spiraling clouds. On the right arm, another beast of the same caliber stretched up his flesh, disappearing underneath the short sleeve, complete with sharp claws and shimmering scales. Before him stood a young man, painted with dragons. Any words left in his mouth fled like bats from bright light, leaving Jack wide-eyed and stunned. Each lithe line curved on the boy's skin in perfect sync, blending into dark blacks and soft ashes. He had seen dragon tattoos

before, but none like these.

"I, uh..." Jack sputtered, "Y-you're nickname doesn't happen to be Dragon Boy, does it?"

The smirk on Hiccup's face fell into a baffled frown, "How-how did you know that?"

"Someone came in yesterday, and she kept going on about some Dragon Boy, and his freaking huge dragon tattoos." He gestured with his hands in exaggeration. Honestly, he had pictured the "mysterious" Dragon Boy to be a bit bigger, not this scrawny little fish bone.

Hiccup gave him an incredulous stare for a few uncomfortable seconds, then averted his eyes back to the portfolio, "Could I take a look?"

"Oh! Yes, of course!" Jack pretty much shoved it into the boy's hands just to stop the maladroit staring contest these two seemed to be having. Since when did he lose his cool?

* * *

><p>Back in the lounge, North continued mulling over some new drawings as Aster sat next to him, chewing on his fingernails; waning off the nicotine was obviously taking its toll. And by obvious, I mean he looked like a deranged maniac, all bug-eyed and twitchy. Geez this guy needs a hobby...<p>

"Bunny, you shouldn't be doing that." North susurrated in the quiet room.

"I know, I'm just nervous." Aster started gnawing a little faster, if that were possible.

"About what? Smoking? Is nothing to worry about!"

"No...we got another call from Pitch."

North's blue eyes widened at the name, "Pitch? What does he want?"

It became so quiet, they could nearly hear the mice humping in the walls. Pitch was a name they were all too familiar with and wherever they saw it, devastation was sure to follow like a hailstorm over a glass factory.

"You know what he wants, North."

"Well, if he calls again, tell him what I told him last time."

"And that would be?"

"To take his money and stick it." He said much too calmly as he returned to his sketches.

Aster sighed and started nibbling faster, causing the edge of his nail to chip off in the process. He was really regretting not taking his pack of cigarettes with him today.

* * *

><p>"See anything you like?" Jack questioned. A few minutes had passed by, and both young men had said nothing.<p>

"These are really good, but I'm still not sure which one I should get." Hiccup flipped page after page. Each drawing stood out like a bikini-clad beauty amongst frumpy housewives, swimming with color and unfathomably rich details, and yet it was like picking one Victoria's Secret model out of dozens. He just couldn't decide.

"So, you just moved to the city, right?" The white-haired lad leaned against one of the chairs.

"Yeah, why?"

"Just wondering... Have you been to any of the places around town?"

"Not really."

"Well, you should head down to the Burgess Movie Theater, that place is always a good time."

The brunet peeked at him, closing the book slightly, "We were gonna go down there, actually."

Jack turned to face him, "Really? What time?"

"Around 9:00, I guess. We're just sightseeing in the mean time."

"That's interesting. My friend and I were gonna head down there too, around the same time."

"Oh, then maybe we'll see you there."

It grew uncomfortably silent between the duo as they exchanged glances. Apparently, these two sucked when it came to conversation.

"Alright. And, I think I'll come back tomorrow, because I'm having a hard time deciding what I wanna get." The brunet spoke up, defusing the quietness.

"Of course, not a problem."

Hiccup handed back the portfolio to Jack as he stood up and they both walked out of the room. The boy's friends were still out in the front, the guys continuing to look at the pictures whilst the girls chatted idly as they sat in the plastic chairs.

"Hiccup!" Astrid got up from her seat and moved towards him, causing the rest of them to look in their direction.

"I decided to come back tomorrow." He gave her a half-hearted smile, "But, Jack here told me he's gonna be heading to the movies around the same time we are. Isn't that, um, interesting?"

"Really?" The blonde quirked a brow at the tattoo artist. What an odd coincidence.

"Yeah." Jack gave the girl a sheepish smile, rubbing the back of his neck slightly.

"Great! Well, I guess we'll see you later then."

The others, overhearing the conversation, already headed out the door and waited nearby for their departure as Astrid slowly backed towards the exit as well, waiting for the brunet.

"So, I guess I'll see you later." Jack repeated with a grin.

"Yeah, and it was nice meeting you!" Hiccup said as he moved to Astrid's side and left the building.

"You too..." The youth mumbled under his breath as he watched the Dragon Boy and his posse evaporate from sight.

For a moment Jack felt frozen, like the world and all its sorrows vanished into nothing more than a bad dream. A complete stranger somehow had the ability to reduce him into a hot mess instead of his usual cool self. He couldn't begin to comprehend how or why his insides felt like gooey mush, but they just did. In front of girls, Jack could say absolutely anything and still feel comfortable, but in front of this little goofball, he didn't even understand what he was feeling.

"Jack, could you please stop picking up the customers and do your work? It's not good for business, ya know." Toothiana dictated from behind her desk.

"What are you talking about? I wasn't picking up anybody!" He didn't even realize she was still there.

A '_whatever_' was said under her breath as she went back to her own work, leaving Jack to glare at her before going off to do his own things.

* * *

><p>Time couldn't go by fast enough for Jack, undoubtedly since fewer than 5 customers had come in the entire remainder of the work day. They were all either men, or middle-aged women, so he couldn't flirt either (how boring). Jack, for some unknown reason, had the tendency to flirt constantly, and only having folks who were old enough to be his grandparents weren't the kind of people he wanted to hook up with.<p>

Once 8:57 rolled around, he was practically stationed at the door, ready to haul his ass on out of there once the clock hit 9:00.

"Jack! You are going somewhere?" North chuckled under his breath. The large man moved into the front and stood near Anna's desk, resting an arm on the flat surface.

"Yep, he's gotta hot date tonight!" Anna giggled as she turned off her computer, shimmying to emphasize the last three words.

"Who's got a hot date?" Aster chimed in as he moved out from behind the curtain and stood next to the Russian.

Before Jack could get two words in, the pixie-like woman cut him off, "Our little cupcake here has a date with a boy who came in earlier!"

"It's not a date-"

"Well now, I didn't even know you were into blokes!" The man cut him off with a snicker, receiving any icy stare from the boy.

"I don't even-"

"You should go for it, Jack! He's cute!" She chimed.

"What-"

"Jack! How many times have I told you not to be running off with customers!" North began before breaking into a large bout of laughter in which all 3 joined in, all except for the youngest of the group.

"Okay, 3 things. One, I don't date guys. Two, we just both happen to be going to the same place at the same time. And three, at least I'm going out tonight." He made wide hand gestures at each individual for each point, keeping direct eye contact with Aster just for the last one.

"What's that supposed to mean, Snowflake?" The Aussie narrowed his green eyes at the statement.

"I would love to tell you, but," Jack looked over to the clock to see it was now closing time, "I'm going out. See ya Bunny!" He dashed to the door and ran out, a puckish grin in tow, leaving the trio (and Aster's hilarious expression) behind. That was, most definitely, the highlight of his day.

* * *

><p>Moments later, after hitching a ride in a taxicab, Jack found himself at one of the oldest movie theaters in town. The Burgess Movie Theater stood a paragon to the city's retrograde past; the phosphoresce of the gleaming, Broadway lights shined on the sign, around the names of new movies done in raven letters, and glossy posters hung out on the outer walls in glass frames. It had looked this way for over 50 years, and that's what Jack liked about it. It never changed.<p>

"Hey Frosty!" Someone called out from the crowd building up outside, a puny sound compared to the screams and yells of the public. He probably would've missed it if the speaker didn't run up behind him.

"Madame Baby Tooth." The lad turned to the female upon her arrival and gave a mock bow complete with exaggerated hand movement.

"That's 'Your Royal Bitchin' Highness' to you, bub." She lifted up her chin in a pompous fashion.

"That makes sense. You are, in fact, bitchy."

Feigning hurt, she placed a palm over her heart and brought the back of her other hand to her forehead, speaking in an awful southern accent, "Oh, my stars and garters! You dare speak to me in such a way? My delicate lady sensibilities!"

"You're one to talk, Sailor Mouth."

Baby Tooth jocularly punched his arm as they ushered themselves indoors. The inside of the building was just as grand as the outside: lush red carpeting ran across the floors, portraits of movie stars long gone lined the walls, and golden lighting fixtures adorned the ceiling, twisting and curling like shooting stars on strings. The folks present just added to the fun, since the place was chockablock with both young and elderly couples on dates, or groups of goofy friends hanging out, and a few children scuttling around like Lilliputian spiders.

"Come on, Jack! You wanna get something from the concession stand?" Baby Tooth tugged his arm, dragging him along behind her as they navigated around the crowd. The stand had all sorts of sugary and salty confections they determined as the girl ran her eyes over each individual item, contemplating their worth since she avoided anything that could damage her teeth. Which was pretty much everything.

"Hmmm, do you want to get some popcorn then?" She spoke, casting her eyes down on a box of chocolate covered raisins with a grimace.

Jack couldn't respond since he managed to lose himself in space. He searched for a familiar face from earlier out of the others, hoping to catch a glimpse of the elusive Dragon Boy, or Hiccup. What an odd name. Then again, why was he on the look out for him? It was kind of weird to keep an eye out for a stranger.

"Heeeellooo? Frosty-boo? What're you staring at?" The colorful girl flicked him behind the ear, a small bag of popcorn cradled in her arm.

"Nothing." He shrugged, still studying the multiple faces.

"Geez, Horndog, stop checking the girls out and let's get to the movie." She started walking off towards the hallway guarded by an usher, popping a piece of the salty snack in her mouth.

"Wait. What about the tickets?" He trotted after her, slowing his pace once they were side by side.

"I already got them. I got to pick the movie, remember?" She handed the tickets to the employee, who tore them and said to go to Room 9.

Well shit, that completely slipped his mind. As they moved up the hall, a lurching feeling grew in his stomach that begged for the movie to be anything but a chick flick. He would take anything at all over some shitty romantic comedy or some sad crap about a horse. Hell, he'd take The Human Centipede at this point.

Room 9 was the last room at the end of the hallway, past Room 7 showing The Purge and Room 8 showing Now You See Me. Their room, on the contrary, was showing Man of Steel, much to his surprise.

"Oh yeah, and you owe me \$20 for paying for everything." She deadpanned as she went in.

Without any hesitation, he plucked out a bill and slapped it in her hand as he followed along from behind, "Have I ever told you how awesome you are?"

"Of course I am, honeybun." She stated matter-of-factly, scanning the place for a good set of seats.

Jack looked around too, until he spied a recognizable green jacket next to a familiar group of blonds. There, near the top, sat the boy with the dragon tattoos, Hiccup. Pointing to them, he asked, "How about over there?"

Before she could answer, he maneuvered up the steps and plopped himself directly next to the brunet, saying in a chipper tone, "Fancy meeting you here!"

"Oh! Hi Jack." Hiccup definitely wasn't expecting this. Was the dude stalking him or something?

"Hey Jack." Astrid leaned over with a coquettish simper directed at him.

Ruffnut let out a flirtatious "Hey~," adding a lecherous tone to her voice as well as waggling her eyebrows suggestively, only to have Tuffnut laugh at her and remark of how unladylike she was behaving, earning himself a flick on the nose in return.

"Can I sit here with you guys?" Jack inquired.

"Yeah!" "Of course!" Both girls rang out excitedly, echoing their sentiments.

"Why'd ya run off on- uh, hello." Baby Tooth started as she approached her runaway companion, until she caught sight of the new faces.

Jack gingerly patted the seat beside him, "Come on, sit down your 'royal bitchy_ _highness_'."

Letting out a humph, she dropped beside him, keeping her head up indignantlty.

"Hi, I'm Hiccup." The brunet gave her a quick wave and shy smile.

"I'm Astrid." The girl next to him copied his movement, and pointed to the three beside her, "This is Fishlegs, and those two are Ruffnut and Tuffnut." The others gave a simple smile, wave, and nod.

"O-okay? I'm Baby Tooth." The colorful female gave an unsure grin before whispering in Jack's ear, "Who the hell are these people?" She

had somehow been roped into sitting with two loud mouthed twins (since they were now bickering), a bashful behemoth with rosy cheeks, a chick who looked like she could snap her in half, and a skinny toothpick. What was this? The carnival?

He murmured back, "They came in the shop earlier."

"That doesn't really answer--"

"So Hiccup," Jack stopped her mid sentence and turned to the boy beside him, "I didn't really peg you as a Superman fan."

"Oh, he's not." Astrid interjected before the freckled fishbone could respond, "We were planning on seeing This Is The End, but Lady Hiccup over here apparently hates Jay Baruchel."

"I-I never said I hated him, I just think he's kind of dorky."

"You do realize that you sound exactly like him?"

"I do not."

"Yeeaahh, Hiccup. You kinda do." Jack nodded beside him.

The brunet quipped sarcastically, "Thank you, for pointing that out."

The youth smiled down at him humorously, "No problem."

* * *

><p>After the film, all members of the party were struck in awe. Although fairly humorless, the movie was overflowing with burning bright fire, blood-boiling action, and righteous destruction, much to the delight of the rowdiest of the group (a.k.a. the twins). Fishlegs gave a gung-ho rant about the camerawork, complimenting the filmmakers on the use of multiple locations and audacious designs they used for the alien technology. Hiccup, on the other hand, tossed in his two-cents about the animation, pointing out the minutiae of how everything possessed a realistic quality (i.e. the work on the costumes, or the age details on the spaceship). Jack couldn't help but become a bit invested in his words, a chatter of how amazing the quality was, or how smoothly the work flowed.<p>

After walking out of the room, the group headed back into the lobby, filled with more lackadaisical nighttime customers. The demure patrons of earlier were replaced with shaggy haired skaters, young hipsters complaining about mainstream media, and some tattooed bohemians complete with piercings.

"So, did you guys like it?" The ever reliable Jack was the first to break the ice. Fishlegs opened his mouth to begin another rant about the film's highlights, but was quickly shushed by Ruffnut, who placed a hand over his trap to snuff out his over-analytical onslaught before it began.

"It was great!" Hiccup bore an excited grin. It felt nice for him to talk about a topic he knew with Jack, instead of keeping silent like he usually did.

"Yeah, this was fun. We should hang out again sometime." Baby Tooth said in her high-pitched voice, to which Astrid chimed in with, "Most definitely."

"How 'bout tomorrow?" Jack asked among a cacophony of voices from other moviegoers, including Ruffnut and Tuffnut who began an argument over who was a better superhero: Superman or Batman.

"You sure?" Hiccup felt as though he were imposing.

"Why not? Baby Tooth and I can take you guys out tomorrow night, it'll be fun." He jauntily nudged the other male with his shoulder. Before the brunet could remark, Jack flipped out a business card from his hoodie pocket and handed to him. In bright, blue letters, it said the name 'Jack Frost' along with a phone number. How flashy, did this guy give out his number often?

"Just give me a call then, and it was nice meeting you all!" Jack and his friend waved goodbye to the boy and his companions, before he leaned in and and whispered to the green-eyed lad, "And I'll be seeing you at the shop tomorrow for your tattoo."

A small shiver shot up Hiccup's spine as he watched his impromptu guest for the night and his colorful cohort slip away, out of the exit and into the night. While turning to face the rest of them, he noticed Astrid staring dreamily at where Jack had just been. Kind of like the way he used to stare at her when they were kids.

"Geez Astrid," slipped out his lips as he made his way over towards Fishlegs, "You're not very subtle."

* * *

><p>Once out of the building, Baby Tooth faced Jack and clamped a hand on both of his shoulders, looking up at him owlshly and gaping like a fish. The kind of face a kid would make if they discovered their parents were international super-spies.<p>

"Oh my god." She squeaked, barely audible.

"What?"

"Jack..."

"Dude, what?"

"I-I can't believe what's going on..." A faint smile started sprouting on her pink lips.

"Huh?"

"Y-y-you were flirting with him!"

"What?!" He backed away, leaving her grinning at him like a lunatic. He hadn't seen her smile that big since he bought her Magic Mike on DVD for her birthday.

"Holy Molars, I didn't even know you were into dudes!"

Jack let out an exasperated sigh as he started walking away, "I'm not into dudes, and I wasn't flirting with him."

"Oh, don't deny it Pickle Biter!" She chased after him, "I saw the way you were looking at him during the movie."

"He was talking to me, of course I was looking at him!"

"Ooo, you wanna jump his bones and make sweet, sweet gay love to his bony butt!" The girl glomped on him, wrapping her arms around his neck and tilting her head back dramatically.

"I'd rather make sweet, sweet love to my bed right now."

Letting go, she squeezed his side as they moved towards the crosswalk, "Admit it Jack. You think he's cute!"

"I will not confirm, nor deny that statement." He deadpanned as they ushered themselves across the street.

"Then why'd ya ask him out?"

"I never did such a thing, please get your head out of your ass."

"Hey! You said you wanted to hang out with him tomorrow, and you gave him your little business card. You only give those things to girls you pick up."

"He needed my number, so I gave him my number. And I invited everyone, Brainiac."

They stepped up the sidewalk towards two lone taxicabs, and she let loose a melodramatic laugh, "Oh, but having the rest of us go is just a ploy to cover up your master plan."

"And what would that be, Sherlock?"

She opened the car door and remarked smartly before closing it, "To get in his pants."

Baby Tooth's cab sped off into the night, leaving Jack's face a hue similar to sunburn. He told himself right there and then, that he did not, in any shape, way or form, like the little Hiccup that way. For one thing, he was a dude and Jack didn't swing in that direction. Not to mention the boy was so scrawny, it would be like shacking up a twig. A twig with really pretty eyes and a cute smile. Whoa, wait a minute...

Jack flung that thought out of his head and kicked it to the curb as he moved towards the other cab, hitching a ride back to his apartment so he could focus on anything besides the skinny, freckled, gangly boy called Hiccup.

3. Chapter 3

Author's Note: I am deeply sorry for this being so late! Unfortunately for me, my muse is a fickle bitch. I tried my best on this one, so please forgive me. And as a gift for all those people

who waited, I will be posting a sexy, little one-shot later on for those who want one. As always, feedback is greatly appreciated and fuels me to continue writing. If anyone has questions, comments, or concerns, or just wants to say hi, you can reach me on my tumblr: thehijackzombie. Thank you for reading, and I will try to be a little more on time!

Warning: some offensive slurs.

Disclaimer: these characters belong to Dreamworks, and I have nothing.

* * *

><p>Ch. 3: Femminella<p>

The chilly October air consumed the city, twisting clouds into heavy cotton balls and the sky into a dull azure. Minute tinges of frost clung onto everyone's breath, turning them into quaint little puffs of airborne condensation. Autumn birds stuck close to the trees and ledges, preparing themselves for Burgess's unforgiving winter, while chubby squirrels plucked whatever food they could find from trash bins and discarded containers. Golden yellows and burning reds fell from the heavens to the earth, washing it in a sea of fire. This time of year always brought plump fruits and wild activities; a time for friends and family to be close as the world began to slip into its annual slumber. A time that usually brought Hiccup Haddock great joy.

The young man in question sat at an old black bench at a nearby park, surrounded by leaves swimming down from their branches like birds diving into the ocean. The cold puckered the sensitive skin on his neck, trailing gooseflesh down his spine. It wasn't that he minded the cold, he grew up in temperatures far chillier than this, but his nerves betrayed him as they flinched when another breeze rolled by. Hiccup pulled his overcoat closer to seep some warmth back into the area, crossing his arms over his chest protectively. It was hard adjusting to a foreign city, especially since he was a common country bumpkin who spent 18 years of his life living in a small town far away.

Burgess sure was different from Berk. Where Berk had thousands of trees, Burgess had hundreds of skyscrapers; where the small town housed a few people and dozens of sheep, the sprawling city sported hordes of men in black suits and ties. It was Hiccup's home, a place where everyone knew each other and shared what they had. This place was boiling over with complete strangers and people far more concerned with their own affairs than their neighbor's.

"Hey there, grumpy. What's with the sourpuss?"

Hiccup looked up from his brooding to see Astrid, wrapped up in a loose grey jacket and checkered scarf, a concerned smile gracing her pink lips. Her diamond eyes searched his face for an answer, before she shrugged and settled herself beside him, stretching her arms and settling them in her lap.

"Whatcha doin' here all by yourself, hmm?" The blonde prodded his arm a bit, leaning closer.

"Just sitting, I guess. Wait...how did you find me? I didn't tell you where I-"

"Fish told me."

"Ah yes, the ever-observant Dr. Fishlegs: Master of unnecessary information and useless facts. Of course he would know where I am. He knows everything, like Johnny Depp's Indian name."

"Wow, Sarcasmo, could you keep the wisecracking down a little?"

"Nope. You guys aren't gonna be here for very long, so I have to keep the satire on maximum overdrive."

With a smirk, she gave him a quick jab to the shoulder, "Well, Great Wizard of Sass, you gonna head down to that tattoo shop today?"

The breath hitched in the brunet's throat, as he rubbed small circles around his arm. The very thought had completely slipped his mind, because he pretty much shoved it off a cliff and busied himself with plenty of unpacking and stupid cat videos. It wasn't that he disliked the shop, it was actually one of the coolest places he'd seen since he got here; and it wasn't like he was afraid of getting a tattoo, on the contrary, he had gotten a few in some very painful areas (wrist, neck, etc.). No, what really struck him dead was a certain white-haired, blue-eyed tattoo artist that just happened to run into them at the movies last night. That Jack fellow just brought a horrible bout of nervousness into Hiccup's stomach that he absolutely abhorred. He felt so raw and exposed underneath that icy stare strong enough to wither grown women into quivering messes, with a voice that rivaled George Clooney's sensual baritone. He was like a character pulled straight from every teenaged girl's steamy, hormonal fantasy. Jack was good-looking, Hiccup was willing to admit, and it made him feel like a deformed duck next to a swan. Especially since Astrid kept ogling the poor bastard the same way a dieter looks at a doughnut.

"Yo! You're spacing out on me Dragon Boy." The girl waved a hand in front of his face, drawing him back out of his mind.

"Huh?"

"Don't chicken out, dude. You wanted to go remember?"

"Yeah, but-"

"Wait, do you still have Jack's number?" She sat up, her eyes sparkling with anticipation.

"Y-yeah? I got it on my phone-"

"Give it here!"

Before Hiccup could react to the command with a 'no' and a witty comment, a blatant hand shoved itself into his front pocket, rummaging around until it fished the rectangular device out of its secure hiding spot.

"I-hey-whoa! Astrid, what the hell?! D-did you just feel me up and

take my phone? Don't you have your own?!" Hiccup stretched out his hand to snatch it back, only to have her smack it back down after many futile attempts.

"I left it at your place 'cause the battery died." Okay, that was a lie, "And I just wanted to send him a text. Don't get your panties in a twist."

"Sweet Odin, why?"

"He's hot, and he's available. Do I need to explain any further?"

Hiccup had just witnessed the strangest phenomenon since the discovery of how babies are made: Astrid openly admitting she found someone attractive. She never (and I repeat the word never) talked about who she thought was cute or who she wanted to date. That part of her was zipped up tighter than Kim Kardashian's jeans.

"Wait, he's gonna think it's me!" He reached again for the phone, leaning on her completely and stretching for it as she put a hand on his face to keep him at bay. Unnervingly calm, she scrolled through his contacts without even batting an eye, keeping her palm flat against the struggling male effortlessly.

"No, even if I texted him with my phone, he wouldn't recognize the number anyway." Astrid moved her arm away, allowing the brunet to flop across her lap with a huff.

"Please, for the love Thor, don't send him anything dirty." He muttered, words muffled by the fabric of her jeans.

"Oh my Gods, I'm totally doing that now, and I'm gonna make him think it's you."

"If you do, I'm going to tell everyone about what happened on the plane."

Hiccup sat up as the blonde froze mid-text, pupils narrowing while she stared at him murderously, "You wouldn't dare."

"Yep. Everybody's gonna know the story of how you-"

"Fine! Geez you're a bitch." The girl looked over her message and changed it into a simple greeting of '_Hey Jack! What's up_', then looked the boy straight in the eye with a grimace, "Happy now, you little shit?"

He grinned cheekily, tone leaking with sarcasm, "Yes, yes I am. Thank you so much for asking."

Before she could retort, the phone gave off a series of beeps, "Ooo, he texted back!"

"Well, of course he-"

"Shut up."

"Oh, you're such a lady. What'd he say?"

"Uh, he said '_I don't mean to sound rude, but who the hell is this?_'"

"Just tell him it's us."

She deadpanned, quickly typing back a response, "No I'm telling him it's the tooth fairy."

Within an instant, the youth on the other line answered back: _Oh, you guys! I thought it was aliens._

You: _Aliens?_

Jack: _Why not? I've got txts from the government b4, they asked me 2 do their laundry._

The blonde giggled and quickly typed back, much to the brunet's dismay since all he could do was sit and watch while his phone was being held hostage.

You: _I think that might've been a prank._

Jack: _No, I'm pretty sure it was the government. They sent me a pic of some guys in suits making duckface._

You: _Yeeaahhh, whatever floats your boat. So... Hiccup and I were wondering if you wanted to get some coffee?_

Jack: _Sounds good. I don't have work till 1, so I have time to kill. Wanna try the Mermaid's Den? That place is really good._

You: _Sweet! How about we meet up in 30 minutes?_

Jack: _Cool. Now excuse me, I have to get all dolled up ;p_

Astrid positively beamed with delight, as she stifled a few loose giggles and settled down in her seat, "He wants to hang out at some place called the Mermaid's Den in a couple of minutes!" She couldn't stop the giddy feeling as it overwhelmed her, forcing her to bounce in her seat. How out of character.

Hiccup, relieved to see she was no longer under the hypnotic trance of the tattoo artist's words (somewhat), grinned at her awkwardly, "Yeah, yeah that's great. But, ah, Astrid?"

"Yeah?"

"Can I have my phone back?"

* * *

><p>Jack certainly wasn't expecting this. A text message in the morning from an unknown number, that led into some dorky humor and an invitation for coffee with a blonde and a brunet. The messages he usually got this early in the day were from Baby Tooth, trying to convincecoerce him into doing something (usually stupid or otherwise). Or from certain young beauties he gave his number to the night before. But never an invitation for coffee with some friendly acquaintances. Not that he hated the idea, actually, it sounded quite delightful.

The Mermaid's Den was a small café ran by a redheaded woman and her daughters, with a very whimsical atmosphere and creative menu. It was right next to "The Sandman's" apartment complex and one of his favorite hangouts that he recommended to Jack because of the shop's mixture of peace and playfulness (although Jack thought the little man liked it because he had a crush on the place's owner). Other than that, the Mermaid's Den became the premier spot for Jack's morning rendezvous with coworkers and Baby Tooth. And now new friends.

Fresh out of the shower, icy drops of water raced down his skin as he skimmed his closet's contents for a decent outfit to wear. In the end, he chose a powdery, plaid indicolite shirt, a pair of khakis, and a worn-out pair of black converse. He would've included his favorite blue hoodie, but it needed to be washed, so he decided to do without. The youth moved in front of the bathroom mirror and grabbed his hair gel, sliding the thick fluid into spiky, slightly damp, white locks until he deemed himself adequate. Just for good measure, he slipped in a small, black gauge into his right earlobe (forgive me for failing to mention this beforehand).

After giving himself a once-over, he reached for his phone and keys, dropping them into his pockets before grabbing his headphones and plugging them in, placing them over his ears as he headed out the door. While the city whirled around the lad like a beating heart, Jack couldn't help but automatically check out of it and got lost in the wonderful world of David Guetta and Calvin Harris.

* * *

><p>The Mermaid's Den stood out in curved letters upon an ancient wooden sign above the coffee shop. Once inside, Hiccup soon discovered why it was named so. The place was like Alice in Wonderland hit the beach, complete with marble mosaics across the wall depicting the ocean in fine swirls, and lamps strung along the ceiling that were positively dripping with nautical whimsy; he could've sworn there was sand on the floor. Besides that, the place was absolutely intriguing to the artist's eye. As the duo sat in a small booth suited out in seaweed green, his focus glued itself to the large painting next to the kitchen door, and became lost in the silky whirlpools of blues and yellows.

"Wow. This place is, ahem, interesting." Astrid spoke from her seat, eyeballing the small, bare-chested mermaid statue on the table.

"Yeah. Interesting is good word." Hiccup murmured from the opposite side, and let his green gaze analyze some of the decor.

Out of the kitchen came a fair young lady, hair glowing cherry red and tied into a loose ponytail over the side of her shoulder. She adjusted a few menus in her grasp and trotted over to the table, bouncing with jubilant energy. "Welcome to the Mermaid's Den, can I get anything for you two?" Her olive eyes glowed with bubbly energy.

Completely entranced by this quirky new figure, Hiccup gawked at her in quiet disbelief, leaving the blonde to answer, "Could you give us a couple of minutes? Our friend hasn't arrived yet."

"Okay, I'll come back in a little bit." She placed three menus down, and backed away, her chipper demeanor never fluctuating. The brunet was utterly struck in awe. Their waitress looked almost exactly like one of the multiple mermaids in the portraits and murals crawling around the place. All she needed was some scales and a tail. Hell, let's throw in a talking crab while we're at it!

"So Hiccup..." Astrid began, catching his attention, "What do you think about Jack?"

"He seems cool. A little too friendly, if you ask me."

"Hm. I just hope he's available."

"Dude, it wouldn't matter since you're leaving in, like, less than a week." He flicked a loose bit of paper off the table.

"Yeah, I know. Do you think he'd be into long distance relationships?" She winked at him and grinned.

"Really? You have to discuss this with me. _Really_?"

A deep voice whispered huskily in the brunet's ear, "Discuss what?"

Hiccup did, what can only be described as, a spastic freakout comparable to a Bill Hader overreaction from _Saturday Night Live_. That includes a pinched face, flailing arms, and an inhuman (and unbelievably hilarious) squeak that, in total, lasted for less than 2 seconds.

Turning around, the startled fishbone looked at his close-proximity assailant to see none other than Jack, hunched over and crying with laughter. "Whoa, sorry bro. Didn't mean to scare ya!" The blue-eyed albino managed to breath out.

"Hiccup, you are priceless." Astrid snorted out, wiping away a false tear.

"Ha ha. Yep, I'm an absolute riot. Can you guys quit it?" Hiccup huffed, crossing his arms on the table. The other male flashed a quick smile and settled down beside him, resting an arm across his shoulder, "Aw, come on. Don't be a bad sport, I was just messing with ya."

A prominent moue formed on the boy's face from the contact, followed by the brunet shaking him off and a mumbled, "Scared the crap outta me."

"Hey, at least I didn't grab you!"

"Hey Frosty! Long time no see!" A raven haired waitress passed by, holding a tray filled with steaming mugs for the customers towards the back.

A coy smile formed on Astrid's lips, "So, Jack, I'm guessing you come here often?"

"Yeah, this is my usual spot in the morning."

Over time, the blonde and the white-haired male picked up some meager conversation, covering lighthearted topics such as weather or certain spots around town. All the while Hiccup kept a slight glower adhered to his face, as he stared down at a large mug of frothy coffee set in front of him by their effervescent waitress. Any question pertaining to him he answered quickly, tepidly sipping from his drink every few minutes. Just who did this Jack fellow think he was? He wasn't pissed about the laughing, or his little faux pas. No, he was peeved about the close contact he shared with the guy. They were practically strangers, and yet this little tattooed hipster had the gall to crawl into Hiccup's no-no space. The brunet had a strict rule when it came to socializing: no touchy. He would only allow so if he knew the person for more than a year, or if they were related. He wasn't expecting shoulder bumping, an arm on him, or little whispers that ghosted across his ear like invisible kisses from hell.

"I'll be right back." Astrid stood from her spot, heading towards the lady's restroom. Crap. She left him all alone with Mister Friendly. Green eyes twitched as he stared forward into space; he could practically feel the other male advert his gelid gaze onto him.

"Hiccup, can I ask you something?" Jack began, encroaching like a limitless flood.

He cringed internally, mentally screaming to himself 'oh please, please, please! For the love of everything good, please don't ask something weird!', "S-sure?"

"Hiccup isn't your real name, is it?"

"No! Of course not."

The youth let out a whew of relief, visibly relaxing and sinking further in the plushy seat, "Oh, thank God! I thought your parents got drunk the night they named you or something!" He peered over at him quizzically, "So, what is your name?"

"I prefer being called Hiccup, if you don't mind."

"What? Is it something embarrassing?"

"No. I just don't like telling it to strangers."

"Ooohhh. Got cha." Jack rested his arm on the back of the booth, nodding knowingly.

"...I'm just going to assume your name isn't really Jack Frost. Because if it is, you must be a total hoot around the holidays."

The blue-eyed lad let loose a series of small sniggers, before breaking out into another fit of soft laughter, "Aw geez, Hiccup. You're killing me!"

The laughter was tangibly contagious, causing Hiccup to try and suppress a few giggles before following suit, "Don't tell me it is!"

Cooling down, Jack simpered in his direction, "Eh, it's sorta my nickname too. I guess that's something we have in common."

The previous feelings of distaste and taut attitude dilapidated into a familiar, dulcet sensation of comfort. The handsy, white-fringed tattoo artist managed to break past Hiccup's protective wall, and establish a common ground for them to stand on and be equal. They quietly nursed the cooling drinks, prior to Jack bringing up another question, "So, what kind of music do you listen to?"

"Eh, I-I don't really have anything _specific_ in mind."

"Uh, favorite bands?"

"Hmm...Well, I like Green Day, Fall Out Boy, Coldplay-"

"Whoa, _Coldplay_? And here I thought you were into rap!" He mused, feigning disbelief by squishing a hand on his own cheek.

Hiccup's sardonic attitude leaked into his deadpan response, "Totally. And, I'm guessing you're into hardcore death metal?"

The other male closed his eyes and bit his lip as he raised a fist into a _rock-on_ hand gesture, and slowly started banging his head, "Most definitely."

They both went into a fit of delighted giggles, like a pair of middle school boys over the number 69, until a blonde head complete with diamond eyes pursed her lips and quirked a brow in their direction, "You guys having a good time?"

"Huh? Oh, hey Astrid." The brunet beamed at her, the male next to him continuing to snicker.

She plopped down in the seat opposite of them, "Did I miss anything interesting?"

The two boys exchanged a faint glance, and chimed in unison, "No, not really."

* * *

><p>"Jack, can I ask you something?" Hiccup whispered to the boy as they walked side-by-side down the sidewalk, directly behind Astrid, who seemed to be lost in her own thoughts.<p>

"Shoot."

"Your friend, her name's a little-"

"Weird?"

"Yeah."

"You're one to talk!"

Letting out a guffaw, the brunet raised his head indignantly, "I'll have you know it is _Viking tradition_."

"Oh, yeah, _sure_."

"It is! Our parents gave all of us nasty nicknames to ward off

trolls, or some crap like that."

The other sucked in his lips to prevent himself from bursting out with sniggers, "Y-you can't be serious. Please, tell me you're joking?"

"Nope. So, why is she called Baby Tooth?"

Clearing his throat, he shrugged and stuffed his hands in his pockets, "I started calling her that when we first met. Do you remember the receptionist from the shop?"

"The one with the crazy hair?"

"Yep. That's Baby Tooth's aunt, Toothiana-"

"Wait, Toothiana? Are you serious?!"

"Uh-huh. I don't know, she's from Southeast Asia." He waved a hand around to emphasize his point, "But, you gotta see these two side by side, I mean, they look almost exactly the same! Baby Tooth's real name is Beatrice, but I started calling her that 'cause she's like mini version of Toothiana, and it just stuck."

Hiccup grinned goofily at the statement and how ridiculous the whole affair sounded. What was with the sudden influx of odd names? All the while, Jack averted his gaze onto him and took in all the small details like a fresh breath of air. Every time the kid laughed or smiled, his eyes lit up like endless pools of green dotted with spots of viridian. Or the way his freckles stood out like flecks of paint upon pale canvas, and he couldn't help but wonder how far they traveled down his lithe frame... Okay, stop right there. Bad thoughts, Jack. Very bad thoughts!_

"Whoa, what the hell?" Astrid remarked rather loudly, as they came up to a large crowd gathering in front of a building, all carrying signs and chanting some disparaging comments. Jack opened his mouth to ask a passing man what was going on, until he caught sight of a large sign bearing the words 'Homosexuality is a Sin!' in a dark lettering.

"Ah, crap." Hiccup groaned, egging the others to speed up and get out of this growing disease of homophobia and stupidity. The crowd continued to swell like a cancerous cyst, the only form of antibodies being a few good samaritans yelling back at their bigotry. A few couples even had the audacity to kiss in front of the group just to piss them off.

"Now, just wait a second." Jack took hold of the boy's wrist, tugging him back before he could get any further. A woman from the crowd took one condescending glance at them with complete disgust, and screamed, "You faggots are going to burn in Hell!" while brandishing her sign of a bible verse, letting her religion justify her means. And knowing Jack, he couldn't help but tell her mentally '**Game on, bitch!**' Oh, things were gonna get nasty.

The brunet uttered, "Jack, what are doing?" and tried pulling away, only to have the other male tighten his grip and entwine their fingers. He looked around for something, anything, that he could use to bait her further. Turning his head left and right, his blue eyes

fell on the ultimate form of torture: a bright band of gold encircling Astrid's middle finger.

"Hey, Blondie, could I borrow your ring?" He hinted under his breath, giving her his best puppy face when she was about to mouth a negative response. Who could say no to the puppy face? She twitched her eyebrow, switching her gaze from the white-haired male to the other and back. Just what was he doing? Ultimately, she succumbed to the childish facial expression with a sigh, yanking the piece of metal off her finger and dropping it into his waiting palm.

Jack was either being fueled by bravery, a chance to stand up for people's rights, or pure stupidity, a chance to turn them all into social pariahs. The one thing we can be sure of, is that he really wanted to piss that woman off through any means possible, including the stunt he was about to pull. He strode forward close to the crowd (more so towards the ignorant female) with a puckish simper tugging at his cheeks, and the confused brunet in tow; keeping up the act, he faced the other towards him, placing a hand on either shoulder.

Green eyes stared at him wildly, as the younger opened and closed his mouth multiple times, his words unable to form and coming out as broken syllables. All he could do to assure him everything was fine was wink, and smirk creepily as if he were about to pull some big heist.

"My darling Hiccup..." Jack placed a finger to the boy's lips, shushing the words before they fully formed, "I know this isn't the right place, or the right time, but I just could not wait any longer."

"Hm?"

"I know we haven't been together for that long, and I know this is quite sudden, but I feel in my heart that I should do this..." The albino put on his most sincere look, keeping eye contact with the other, who was now dawning a combination of befuddlement and trepidation upon his face once he removed his hand.

Jack dropped to one knee, keeping the ring grasped tightly in the hand behind his back, and gently took a hold of the brunet's left hand as gasps of horrific surprise and supreme delight echoed around from everyone (including Astrid).

Blue eyes looked up into shimmering green when he spoke artificial words of sentiment that shook the younger to his very core, "Hiccup... Will you marry me?"

Holy moly, something just hit the fan. And let me tell you, it wasn't pleasant. The silence that followed was beyond palpable, it could practically be cut with a knife. Every eye averted to the scrawny kid, awaiting a response, some nodding with hopeful smiles or cursing with disgust. Heck, even the pigeons flying overhead stopped to look at him. Hiccup, now as rigid as a nun talking about sex, turned to look at Astrid for help, but she just gawked in complete astonishment and gaped like a fish. It was a do or die moment at this point, although the end result would be negative either way. If he said no, he would be aiding the bigots and see disappointment in a few faces (mostly Jack's). If he said yes, there was gonna be a

disturbance. He would've loved to have running away as an option, but that would just come back to bite him in the ass. Whatever the case, he was going to give the white-haired idiot the talking of a lifetime.

"I-I-I, I just, what-the... What the _fuck_?!" Hiccup stuttered shamelessly, furrowing his brow and sputtering incoherent words. He pursed his lips in frustration, while the other male maintained his happy-go-lucky smile and glanced around at the other's faces, particularly the woman with the sign. He gulped down a pocket of dry air, tossing his head back and groaning loudly, "If I say yes, can we leave?"

Jack implored through his teeth, "Heh, Hiccup?"

The brunet threw his arms up in defeat; the blue eyed beast with good intentions and horrific timing bested him, "Yes! Yes! Fine, yes! Now can we get the _hell_ outta here?!" He flicked a pointed finger down the street, pleading for their departure from this cluster of unfamiliar faces.

The tattoo artist stood and embraced the boy tightly, pinning his arms down to his sides, as an impenetrable wall of quiet enveloped the picketers and other attendees. It was like the portal to Dante's Inferno had broken open once Jack slid the band onto Hiccup's unwilling ring finger, and out poured an unparalleled cacophony of thrilled cheers and homophobic slurs. The only thing the younger male heard was a wave of clapping that rang against his eardrums, causing the blush on his face to seep further in, reddening him all the way down to his toes.

"_Kiss him_!" A girl cheered beyond anyone's view. Hiccup blacked out slightly at those words, becoming a paralyzed corpse within Jack's arms. He probably would've gone as limp as an overcooked noodle if he weren't so stiff. His body and his mind battled for supremacy over what to do in this situation, which became increasingly worse when others began chanting the same mantra. The brain commanded him to escape his captor's grip and abandon ship, but his body coiled up tighter than a frozen spring and completely disobeyed any further instruction from upstairs. How long had he known Jack? Not even a week, and yet there was a ring on his finger and people telling them to kiss. What on earth did he do to deserve this? Did he cut off a _voodoo priest_ in traffic or something?

The youth loosened his hold, and peeked down into lifeless peridot eyes, which stared at him blankly. "Come on, _kiss him_!" Some guy shouted from behind, followed by more excited cheers. Perhaps it was the peer pressure, or the sunken look on the kid's face that made Jack decide to put his acting skills to work. That's right, _acting_. He had faked plenty of kisses before, for reasons pertaining to him, so this should've been a piece of cake. Except, this would be his first time doing it with a man. _Fantastic_...

Jack allowed his arms to drop to his sides as he carefully leaned in and whispered to Hiccup, "Don't worry, I'll fake it." Clearing his throat, he had to chill his own nerves when he raised shaky hands and rested them against the brunet's burning cheeks. It was just a kiss, and a _false_ one at that! What was the harm? The round face beneath him flushed the most interesting tint of pink he had ever laid eyes on, turning the brown freckles a darker color, and allowed the hue of

his eyes to shift to a shade of green yet to be discovered. Jack carefully slithered his thumb over the other's lips, flawlessly covering them and making use of his hands to escape any onlooker's view. Quick and easy, and now all he had to do was seal the deal. _No problem_.

Hiccup thought his heart stopped for a few seconds. It palpitated like a loose drum in a cement mixer, going faster once foreign flesh touched itself to him. Fear immobilized his body entirely, suppressing all motion as well as thought when a pollex smoothed over his mouth and a chiseled face came dangerously close. This was a moment reserved for sweethearts and lovers; a meeting of lips and hearts shared between two out of love, remorse, or passion. Hiccup felt absolutely _appalled_ over sharing a moment like this with a stranger, who wanted nothing more than to rub his feelings in someone else's face. Even if it was a falsified example of emotion, it still held the same meaning. And yet, he couldn't pull away. Well, he didn't want to be _rude!_ What would happen if he left? But, then again, what would happen if he stayed? Confusion and guilt collided together in a burst of fire underneath his skin, telling him no and then screaming yes, just like the crowd over a simple display. That was it: it was _simple_. Simple, and tragic, and stupid, and immoral, and idiotic, and-

Any and all thoughts melted away into nothing once Jack removed the space between them and created a counterfeit kiss. Cheers exploded from all directions like noisy firecrackers dancing in the sky, overshadowing any objections and silencing them like lit matches into a bucket of righteousness. It may have been fake, but the both of them couldn't stop the jitters from vibrating up and down their fingers, the dry mouths, or the butterflies tangoing in their bellies. The entire time, Jack had told himself, "_Not gay, not gay. Just doing it to prove a point. Not gay._" But the second they shared close proximity, it changed to, "_Aaaaaannnnndddd, I am gay._" Was it bad that he wanted to move his thumb out of the way?

It took some force in order for him to back away and fake a smile, while his impromptu paramour leered at him, countenance painted red with shock. Jack supposed the situation went according to plan, because the woman from earlier screamed and fainted flat out on the concrete upon their pretend lip-lock. _Mission accomplished_. The younger of the two wasn't as elated about this, based on the fact that he looked like he was about to shank his '_fiancÃ©_' in the face 28 times. Or 29, it didn't matter.

Just for his own amusement, he scooped up the brunet bridal style despite his protests, and yelled to the crowd, "Now, excuse me while I take my blushing bride home!" Yes, Jack strolled proudly out of the area with a flushed fishbone cradled in his arms, and a confused/giggling Astrid following close behind. Undeniably, one of the best mornings in human history.

* * *

><p>To young Mr. Haddock, the tender bud of friendship that was blooming between Jack and him had been snipped off the stem and roasted over a flaming pit by the imbecile himself. You're not supposed to propose and kiss an outlander in front of dozens just for fun; albeit the whole affair was fake, it was still a humiliating experience! A considerable distance was built

between the trio and the scene of the crime, although they gained some attention from onlookers who wolf-whistled and cooed about how cute they were. Once they reached a safe point in a nearby park, Hiccup shoved the other male away and dropped from his grasp on to the withering grass, brushing himself off while scowling.

"What? Am I a mail-order bride now?!" The brunet hissed towards the man, seething with contempt. Pissed was a word that couldn't even begin describe the concoction of emotions flooding through him at that point. Blistering fury was pretty close though.

"Is my wife upset?" Jack tried to joke, but the grimace he received caused him to rub the back of his neck nervously. Boy, if looks could kill, he should've been reduced to ash by now. He could virtually see a vein bulging on the boy's forehead.

"Ugh." Hiccup jerked the ring off his finger and pushed it into Astrid's hand, "Jack, first of all, I wouldn't marry you even if you were Christian Bale. Second, I have been publicly humiliated by your actions!"

The white-haired youth felt his heart sink slightly at those last words and the prominent, sullen pout glued to the brunet's face. He screwed up bad this time, didn't he? And he couldn't smooth talk himself out of it. So, he sighed, "Look, Hiccup, I'm really sorry. I was just... I was just trying to piss them off, and I couldn't think of anything, so I used you. I know I shouldn't have, but I'm stupid sometimes-"

"All the time."

"Heh, fine, all the time. H-how about we just start over, huh? Ya know, as friends?" He cocked his head with a nervous smile and extended a hand out.

Reluctantly, Hiccup accepted it and gave a quick shake before tossing back down, "Okay, fine. But this doesn't make up for what you did."

Puffing his cheeks a little, Jack added, "Then how about I take you and your friends out tonight, huh? My treat."

Opening his mouth to deny the offer, Astrid slapped a hand over his trap and began dragging him away behind a tree, mumbling, "Could you give us a minute?" Hidden from view she released her grip and looked him dead straight in the eye, "Say yes!"

In a hushed tone, he spat back, "Are you insane?"

"He's trying to be nice!"

"Well he should've thought about that before planting one on me!"

"... He didn't really kiss you, did he?"

"No! Just-no! Absolutely not!"

"Alright! Now could you please get that stick outta your butt and say yes!"

"Hell no!"

"If you don't, I'll smother you in your sleep!"

"Go ahead!"

"Don't tempt me."

"Astrid, for the last time-"

All that could be heard at that point was bone cracking , a yelp, and Hiccup bursting out, "_Why_ would you do that?!" Turning around, Jack stared wide-eyed at the spectacle of the blonde pushing the brunet towards him, with one arm pinned behind his back and yawping, "Okay! Okay!"

"Uh, you guys cool?" He watched as she shoved the boy towards him, loosening her grip.

Hiccup whimpered, "Ah! Uh, yeah, tonight sounds great!" With a nod of approval, Astrid released him entirely, and gave the most innocent smile that she could muster, "So, what did you have in mind?"

Jack, shrinking away, chuckled, "I, uh, I actually think of anything right now. I'm sure I'll figure something out."

"That's fine, right Hiccup?" She addressed him, false kindness lining her words. The brunet nodded like crazy, wincing as he rubbed his upper arm. Whatever she did to him, Jack sure as hell didn't want to find out.

"Well, it's been fun and all, but I have to get going." The older male muttered as he checked the time on his phone.

"Aw, really?"

"Afraid so, I guess I'll call you guys later after work, bye!" He began walking off and waved to the girl, before he smirked and winked at his '_fiancÃ@_'.

Hiccup groaned once he was out of sight and screamed internally, "Sweet Odin, _shoot me_ now!"

* * *

><p>Shaky vibrations reverberated through steady fingers as they traced delicate lines along fleshy canvas. The air was laced with heady traces of sweat and fine dust particles, which shone underneath the dim lights like stars set loose from their bindings. A delicate hum was produced from Jack's throat as he worked the buzzing needle around in soft swirls and sharp corners, forming a skull surrounded by roses a shade similar to blood. Quietly singing Too Close to himself, he curved the black ink into a petal before tediously stippling along the inside of the bloom.

"Almost done." He assured to the man who nodded in compliance. The skin on his arm swelled beneath the sharp point as it danced across the surface in a terpsichorean manner, leaving black and red marks in its wake like beautiful scars. With added flourish and finesse, the

tattoo started to take its final form as a work of art.

Although vapid and boring, Jack managed to find comfort among his thoughts as he marked line after line. He kept thinking about going outside and breathing the fresh autumn air because of how amazing it felt against his skin (which seemed to burn in the stuffy room beside the machines); or going home to play a little Bioshock, because he never got to play the first game, only the second. One idea kept crossing the threshold of his mind though, one he tried to suppress under layers of music lyrics and hot girls in their skivvies: a skinny, little foreigner by the name of Hiccup (formerly known as the Dragon Boy). Oh, the poor kid was utterly distraught about their little run-in with the protesters and the "kiss." He felt pretty shitty about it, and how lost the brunet looked like a kitten caught in a typhoon.

****_Ring!_****

The phone on Toothiana's desk in front started bouncing with each ring, scaring the living daylights out of everyone within its radius. Carefully listening, he could hear her answer, "Northern Lights tattoo shop, this is Anna speaking, how may I help you?... He's not in right now, can I take a message?... _Excuse_ _me?!_... Yeah, well you can take your- _hey!_... I don't think so! Stop calling, you creep! You're not getting _squat!_" She slammed the phone back down, the sound of plastic colliding with the desk's surface loud enough to startle Sandy in the lounge. Toothiana was a kind, lively soul, and it took an unbelievable amount effort just to make her that mad. Even though she was as gentle as a lamb, she could easily take down a full-grown man, so only an idiot would want to get on her bad side. Whoever it was on the other line must've been suicidal.

Aster cautiously peeked out from behind the curtain and soothingly whispered, "You okay, Tooth?"

"Ugh! That moron has the nerve to-huh? Oh, sorry Bunny." She smoothed down her ruffled hair.

"Anything wrong?"

"Someone's been calling again."

"Who?"

"Don't be stupid, you know _who!_" She must've been beyond peeved because she never cussed.

Aster backed away slowly from her rain of hellfire and slinked back into the workspace, wide-eyed and dazed from her answer. They could all hear her tirade from her seat about '_that stupid jackass!_' The man huffed as he sat in a seat opposite of the young male and began biting the tips of his fingernails.

"Uh, how you doing Egg-man?" Jack questioned, never looking up as he colored in an eye socket.

"Not now, Snowflake."

"Sorry... So, who's been calling?"

Before the Aussie could open his mouth, Anna threw back the curtain and stormed towards the youth, "_Who's_ been calling? I'll tell you _who's_ been calling! An egocentric, pompous, buffoon who has the _balls_ to call, that's who!" Her hair seemed to stick up with each word like a startled cockatoo.

Both Jack and his customer looked up at her like schoolchildren about to be reprimanded, "I-I'm sorry, who?"

"The most maniacal pile of scum to ever stalk the planet, _Kozmotiz Pitchiner_." She cringed at his name as if it were cough syrup sliding down her throat. Now that was a familiar name. Kozmotiz Pitchiner, a.k.a. The CEO and Supreme Overlord of Black Industries. His company had succeeded in buying almost every business in Burgess, mostly family-owned. He made it his goal in life to completely eradicate local shops, and recreate them in his own twisted image; he swept over the town like nightfall, and began a revolution that would envelope the entire city in darkness, until it was nothing but pitch black.

She huffed with disgust and strutted back to her desk, her heels making a rapid staccato on the floor, leaving all the men present scared of her colorful wrath. It was kind of like watching a hummingbird get mad, especially since she'd probably be willing to peck someone's eyes out.

Wincing at the thought, Jack quickly returned to his work and shyly asked, "So, Aster..."

"What did you do?" The Australian grumbled with a stern look directed towards the younger male.

"Little ol' me? I didn't do anything." The expression he received read _'yeah-no, I don't believe you.' _

"Bulldust. You only say my name when you screwed something up, now what did you do this time?"

"Ugh, where do you usually take someone if you really pissed them off?"

"Don't tell me ya screwed over Anna's niece!"

"I'm not _that_ stupid!"

Aster let out a relieved sigh and slumped further in his seat, "Good, so what did you do that was so horrible?"

"Geez," Jack rubbed his cheek on his shoulder, "I got invited for coffee this morning by some guy and his friend, and as we were walking down the street, there was this huge crowd of protestors yelling about gay marriage or something..."

"I do not like where this is going, Frostbite."

"Long story short, I faked proposed to him and-"

"_And_! There's an _and_?!"

"I pretended to kiss him?"

"And, he didn't take it well?"

"Yep, my '_fiancÃ@_' is pissed off. I wanna take him and his friends out to make up for it, so where do you think we should go?"

"I'm guessing a gay bar is out of the question?" He snickered.

Rolling his eyes, the youth stated, "Hardy har har, you're about as funny as a rock. But, seriously, any ideas?"

The older male shrugged, "Eh, sorry kid. I don't think I could be much help in this situation."

"Er, thanks anyway."

"Um, excuse me?" An unknown voice intoned in the silent room. Arching his brows, Jack searched for the source of the sound, until he looked towards his gruff patron who wiggled his fingers at him sheepishly, "I couldn't help but overhear your dilemma."

"Oh, sorry about that."

"It's fine, honey." The brutish male fitted entirely in leather and jeans spoke in an unnaturally feminine voice, "Look, _sweetie_, if you want to lift your little friend's spirits, then you should take him and his troupe down to the new aquarium that just opened."

"Really?"

"Trust me, this place has everything. There's the cute baby fishies for the lighthearted, and then there's the sharks and rays for the more daring. A fabulous combo of toughness, education, and romance. I took my boyfriend there when he was mad at me, and he really loved it."

"Does it open at night?"

"Mmhhh, they're having night tours for a limited time to show off, from 8:00 to 10:00. And don't worry, it's pretty cheap to get in, so I'd hightail it down there if I were you."

"Where is it exactly?"

"Downtown, on Santoff St., where the old opera house used to be. Trust me, this place is _impossible_ to miss, honeybun. It's called _Dream Island Aquarium_, or some fancy smack like that."

Entirely struck with awe, Jack looked at this man as if he were some panache saint sent down to solve his problem, "Wow, thanks!"

"No problem, sugar. Now, could you finish up this little dickie so I can get out of here?" He referred to the half-done tattoo.

"Yes, of course."

* * *

><p>"Come ooonnn, North, please?" Jack begged as he followed the large Russian around the shop like a child asking for candy.<p>

"For last time, no, Jack." North ignored the cutesy pout the boy was making in an attempt to coerce him.

"I really need to be going, come on! It's just a one time thing, and besides, there's no one here! Couldn't the rest of you handle it?"

He lowered his deathly blue gaze onto the youth, "What is so important for you to be leaving hour early?"

"I screwed a friend over bad, and I'm trying to make up for it."

"By shirking your work?"

"No! I just, ugh..." He dropped his head and allowed emotion to flow into his words, "This is just really important North, _please_?"

"Hmmm... And if I say yes, what will you do to pay back?"

"_Anything!_"

"Alright, I let you go early and you owe me favor, deal?"

"Heck yeah!" Jack wrapped his arms around the older gentleman, squeezing with as much strength as he could muster, "Thanks." Before the sentiments could be returned, the young tattoo artist made a mad dash for the door, smiling and running as if he had found the golden ticket.

Once far away, Jack whipped out his phone and hit the call button on Hiccup's number, bouncing with anticipation on each ring.

"Hello?" A familiar voice on the other line spoke up.

"Hiccup! Put your pants on 'cause we're going out tonight!"

"P-pardon?"

"Tell your friends to get ready because we are going to a wonderful spot which I know you'll like."

"You don't know what I like, Jack."

"Oh, but I do! You're my wife remember?"

"Since when did we get married?!"

"3 years ago, we're registered at _Best Buy._"

"Well, I want a divorce."

"I think you just broke my soul. Excuse me, while I write a sad, country song."

"Mmm, country? I don't think so Billy Ray."

Snorting, Jack interjected with a godawful southern accent, "Ow, My achy breaky heart! Torn in two by a flat-chested broad!"

"I'll have you know that I'm a c-cup."

"_Really?_ I never noticed those before, I bet they're implants." He crossed the street, walking past empty buildings and dark apartments.

"Uh-uh, all natural."

"Sounds hot, I'll be right over."

"Hell no. I don't think you're ready for this jelly... My body's too _bootylicious_ for ya."

Jack stopped in his tracks, tearing up with giggles as he heard an uproar of laughter on the opposite line, "Sure, so hurry up and get dressed so I can pick you guys up."

"Pick us up? No, w-"

"_Aw_, too late!"

"Do you even know where I live?"

"Of course I do, Hic, I know everything about you... I know where you eat, where you sleep, and where you shower. I also know what you're wearing right now..."

"_Totally_, and how would you know that?"

He dropped his voice to a hoarse whisper, "Because the call is coming from _inside the house_."

"You have an interesting pastime, stalking pretty, young things like me."

"_Absolutely_. You are the fairest flower of them all, and I must have you for my collection. So fix your lipstick, doll, and hurry up."

"How about no?"

"How about you look out your window?"

Hiccup, huddled on the couch with Astrid and Fishlegs, stood and went out on the balcony. He peered over the edge, to see a head of white hair, grinning goofily at him and phone held up to his ear.

Jack, staring at him directly in the creepiest way he could manage, quipped, "Are you ready yet?"

* * *

><p>It took two taxis to deliver all 6 people to the unknown destination, but once they arrived, any sarcasm Hiccup had left for Jack slipped away into space. What stood before him was a paragon of

intellectual beauty: an oversized aquarium that somewhat resembled a stadium. Rainbow pillars surrounded the building in a plethora of colors, bleeding bright variations of blue and pink. Curved ledges and bubble-like windows made it look as if a child built it, underneath a golden sign of Dream Island Aquarium. This place was a visual delicacy.

"Do you like it?" Jack questioned in the brunet's direction. Hiccup stood awestruck, words caught in his throat from the immaculate scene straight from fantasy.

"An aquarium? Do aquariums even stay open at night?" Ruffnut groaned with uninterested distaste.

"It's open, and don't worry, they have sharks." The youth ushered himself towards the spectacle, followed by Fishlegs, Astrid and Hiccup. The twins shot a quick glance over at each other, high fived, and proceeded to catch up. If it involved anything dangerous, the twins were so in.

The inside was incomparable to the anything else. Ocean waves danced across the ceiling in incoherent patterns of silvery aquamarine accompanied by projections of whales and large, mythical fish. It was as if someone turned Ancient Greek mythology into reality, conjuring forth fair sea sirens, winged beasts, and powerful gods. Once the admission was paid (\$5 per person) they were allowed to venture past the barrier into complete imagination and anywhere they pleased that would allow them in. The twins set off for anything shark-related, Fishlegs was lured into a gallery about sea life and oceanography, while Astrid became distracted by a video playing in one room about shipwrecks and what treasure had been found from their hulls, leaving the albino and the brunet to be consumed by wanderlust. Tanks filled with spiky lion fish and rocky coral, or tiny threadfin cardinals and wriggling sea anemones surrounded them in a dim glow of pale fluorescence. Overhead, swam models of moon jellyfish and Portuguese man-of-wars suited out in opal and neon lights.

"Okay, Jack." Hiccup sighed underneath the reflective pool of the ceiling as they maneuvered down a hallway, "I'll admit it, this is really cool."

"It better be! I had to leave work an hour early so I could bring your freckled butt down here... Not that I'm complaining." He gave the other male a brief pat on the back. The hall seemed to stretch into a larger part of the building as the space widened the further they went past walls covered in peculiar photographs of coelacanths, and paintings of maritime mishaps.

Jack tugged on his collar, "Um, does this make up for what I did earlier?"

The younger boy came to a sudden halt, before resuming his steady gait, "I forgot about that. Thanks for reminding me."

"Shit."

"You know what? It's fine, I'll probably never see those people ever again."

"Really? 'Cause you were _steamed_ earlier. I thought you were about summon some ancient, Nordic curse on me."

"Totally. I practice witchcraft in my free time."

"You are quite _bewitching_."

"You didn't just say that, did you?"

Before Jack could give back a witty response, Hiccup gasped and dashed straight ahead. Following his gaze, the youth became totally entranced by an circular, esoteric room in almost complete darkness; it was like some mysterious cove carved into the place secretly for curious travelers to discover. The other male sat on a stone bench, lost in the void of black that consumed him hungrily as Jack slipped in as well to see what was so astonishing. Dimly lit, he looked around for some source of light until his gaze fell upon an illuminated sign which read '_The Language of Light_'.

"Jack! Look!" The brunet pointed a finger in front of him as a weak light began to glow. It spanned and stretched out, forming stout branches covered in various spectrums of colored radiance. It took the shape of a pulled sphere covered in rainbow cilia. More began to appear and pulsate as they swam around like angelic fireflies of the twilight zone in graceful bioluminescence.

The only thing Jack could get out of his mouth was,
"Wow..."

"They're Comb Jellyfish."

"Comb Jellyfish?" He peered down at the other male who was completely enraptured by the euphoric orbs.

"Yeah, Fishlegs told me."

"Fishlegs? Oh, you mean that dude who kept talking about the movie the other night?"

"Affirmative."

Jack settled beside him on the cold seating, and got lost in the light show of aquatic fireworks. It was an ethereal experience reserved for deities, a moment in time like a hallucinogenic drug. It was as if another world was pulled from its roots and transferred down into one, secluded spot far away from the pain of daily life. The itty-bitty aliens brought forth distant galaxies and unknown dreams. The creatures allowed the duo to venture into their domain, and taste the sweet ambrosia of celestial beings. Casting his eyes to the side for only a second, another sight took hold of Hiccup's gaze. Pale flesh seemingly bathed in moonlight, cast from the dim lights around the room; eternal optics that glowed an unreal indigo, and snowy locks tinged purple from the tank's light. It was such a sight to see, a living statue from the studio of Donatello cast out onto the world to conquer it with his charm. Jack looked photoshopped with frost, an unnatural being of the utmost perfection, and yet he was just as real as Hiccup was.

"Hey guys!" A voice sliced through the peace samurai style, "I've been looking for you every- whoa! Comb jellies!"

Both boys turned to see a peppy Fishlegs grinning goofily at the tank, "Ctenophora, most commonly known as Comb Jellyfish. They are usually found in-"

"Not now dude." Tuffnut belted out from the doorway, followed by Ruffnut who lamented, "I am seriously going to jump off a bridge if I have ta hear another round of your fish trivia."

"It's not fish trivia, this isn't even a fish!"

"Finally! I've been looking for you guys." Astrid joined in, "What're you two doing here all by yourselves?"

Tuffnut wagged his eyebrows, "I bet they're on their honeymoon!"

Rolling her eyes and flicking a strand of hair out of her face, the blonde sighed, "Yeah, well, the guy out front told me we need to get going, so unless you're planning on staying the night, we need to get a move on."

"Do you think they'd let us?" Fishlegs spoke up with honest, childlike innocence. All three blonds looked at him as if he were the epitome of stupidity before the twins turned and left, muttering nonsense about the different species of shark they discovered, followed by Fish who hung his head in disappointment.

"You coming, or what?" Astrid crossed her arms and stared the duo down.

"Yeah." Jack was the first to stand, accompanied by Hiccup, as they all left infinite paradise in favor of harsh reality.

* * *

><p>The air had become bitter, blowing strong winds under a solid sky of black. The magic had faded away into nothing more than memory, and the explorers of the fathomless unknown became regular young adults once again.<p>

"So, will I be seeing you tomorrow? At the shop, I mean." Jack searched young, green eyes for an answer.

Slowly moving towards one of the taxicabs Astrid called earlier, Hiccup gave a timorous chuckle, "I don't think so, I have a job interview tomorrow."

"Really? Where?"

"At the Warren Art Museum."

"That's _soooo_ boring. Why don't you pick a more interesting job?"

"Like what?"

"Lion tamer!"

"I already got a lion at home, and its name is Toothless." He joked,

more so to himself.

"Okay, I guess I'll see you around then." Jack gave a weak wave and turned to leave, hands in pockets.

"Jack?"

"Yeah?" He looked in the younger male's direction to see he was closer now and extending a hand.

"Thank you for a lovely evening."

Instead of just accepting it as an ample goodbye, the tattoo artist grabbed the boy by the wrist and gave him a tight hug, letting him go with a smile, "And thank you for accepting my proposal." Jack ran off, leaving Hiccup blushing like a sunset and standing there on the sidewalk as if he were a lost dog.

"Hiccup! Come on!" Astrid called from one of the cabs, squeezed beside Ruffnut. Shaking himself out of his comatose state, he jogged towards the car and jumped in, slowly moving out of the area.

Sliding next to her, he furrowed his brows in offended confusion, "What's your problem?"

"You are so oblivious, you know that?"

"About what?"

"Ugh, forget it." She crossed her arms across her chest and faced away from him.

"She thinks Jack was hitting on you." Ruffnut remarked nonchalantly as she picked the dirt from her nails.

"What?!"

Astrid gave him a sharp jab to the shoulder, "Thanks for stealing my guy!"

"Hey!"

"It's fine, but just do me a favor." She took a deep breath and gave him a stern look, "Use a condom, I don't want you getting pregnant."

The brunet choked on the saliva in his mouth, while the two girls and the taxi driver began howling with laughter. Hiccup sunk in his seat as far as he could manage, as they all (yes, including the driver) continued cracking jokes about how he should play it safe or else he was going to be a teenage mother the entire ride home.

* * *

><p>Notes: Femminella is actually an old italian slang term for a homosexual man. The fake proposal part was just some idea I thought would be funny to include, and no, they didn't actually kiss. The part about the aquarium, I'm not actually sure if there's any aquarium that stays open really late, but then again this is an AU,

so I don't think it really matters. Some locations, like the Mermaid's Den, are based off the books.<p>

Sorry for my crappy chapter, but this is all I got.

4. Chapter 4

Wow. I'm late as hell. I'm still in complete shock it took me about a month to come up with something, and all I have is this complete crap. This is a short chapter, obviously, and I'm mostly using it to transition from one point to another. I'm also going to shift around time and such. I'm just really sorry that this is all I have! I promise, the next chapter won't suck as much. Consider this a super late Halloween gift.

I have written and rewritten this damn thing about 7 times, and this one sucked the least, so here ya go. On another note, I would like to thank all the wonderful people for their suggestions, you guys make my day~

So, here is another (extremely late) installment.

Disclaimer: these characters don't belong to me, blah blah blah, you know the drill.

* * *

><p>Teenagers<p>

"Okay, I can do this..." Hiccup said to himself.

He tried to be motivated and energized, but, quite frankly, he felt like crap. He was up all night worrying over his resume and other documents, some incomplete sketches, not to mention Toothless wouldn't stop meowing directly in his ear every time he tried to go to sleep. What the hell was up with that cat anyway?

He could worry about that later, right now, he was sitting outside the curator's office, and waited to be called in any moment now. Oh gods, why did he feel so nervous? Hiccup had a job before, plenty actually! But, then again, those were with people he knew. He couldn't help fidgeting his fingers, or picking at the freckles on his hands. He just hoped the curator didn't turn out to be Cruella Deville.

"H-Henry? Henr..." Some man open the office door and popped his head out, trying to read Hiccup's name off the clipboard in his hands.

"Um, i-it's Henrik." The boy sheepishly added.

"Oh, _Oh_! Henrik, that's an interesting name. Come on in!" The man gestured to the office's interior. It was now or never. Hiccup swallowed down those damned butterflies fluttering in his stomach and followed from behind.

The office, although small, was filled with fascinating trinkets and paintings. A golden astrolabe shined on the mahogany desk, next to a fossilized fish skeleton; detailed sketches reminiscent of the

renaissance era were hung up besides tall bookshelves, full of dusty encyclopedias. The one thing that caught his attention most, though, was the abundance of potted plants encircling the room.

"Go ahead and take a seat, son." The man gestured to a plushy chair in front of his desk.

"Thank you, Mr.-"

"Mr. Ostern. So, Henrik, where are you from?" The round man asked, looking down at the resume Hiccup handed him on the way in. He scratched the top of his bald head and fixed the reading glasses balanced on the tip of his nose once he closely examined the paper on top. He didn't mean to be rude, but Hiccup couldn't help but think the man resembled a giant egg.

"From the Faroe Islands."

"Well! You're a far way from home!"

He gave a simple, submissive grin. "Yes sir."

"Hmm, says here you worked in a tattoo shop... Do you have tattoos yourself?"

"Yes sir."

"Ah." The man nodded, his head catching light from the window behind him. "Well, Henrik, I don't mean to be rude or anything, but you'll have to cover those up if you want to work here. That's not a problem, is it?"

"Of course not."

"Excellent. So, can you tell me some more about yourself?"

"Sure. I-"

Three knocks bounced off the office door, and in stepped a woman in a pinstripe pencil skirt and white blouse. She whispered, "I'm sorry to interrupt, sir, but I need you to sign these."

"Of course, pardon me, Henrik." He gestured for her to step forward, taking the papers and clicking his black pen.

As he scrawled in his sharp signature on the dotted lines, the woman kept peeking over at Hiccup, narrowing her eyes and titling her head. The brunet swallowed dryly under the scrutinizing gaze, until she leaned in and tapped him on the shoulder.

"Haven't I seen you somewhere before?"

He tried giving her a weak smile. "Uh, I don't think so?"

"No, I'm sure I've seen you somewhere. Hmm..."

The scratching against paper stopped and the black pen clicked. "Here you go, Beth." Mr. Ostern handed back the small stack and turned back to Hiccup. She took them, slowly stepping towards the door until she released an '_ah_!'

"Now I remember! I saw you the other day, your boyfriend proposed to you in front of those protesters. Congratulations!" She gave the boy a quick pat on the back before scurrying out.

Mr. Ostern's face quickly dropped from a neutral smile to complete befuddlement. The awkward, toothy grin held on Hiccup's lips curled into a lip-bite, his eyebrows curving upward once he turned back to him.

"So... Where was I?"

"Care to explain?" Mr. Ostern's voice lost its playful tone, becoming more condescending.

"A-about what?"

"You're _engagement_."

Oh shit.

"Um, I-I can explain..."

"_Explain_!? There's no need to explain!" Mr. Ostern's pinched mouth opened to release an airy laugh, his eyes lighting up like sparklers. "Marriage is an exciting thing for young couples! How long have you two been together?"

"Heh, n-not very long, actually."

"So what's the lucky fella's name?"

"J-Jack."

"And how long till the wedding?"

"Um, not for a while."

Gosh, where the hell was this conversation going? Hiccup came in for an interview, not for a chat over tea. But, once the words '_marriage_' and '_engagement_' came up, Mr. Ostern shifted from polite professional to interested friend. For almost a full hour, the man went on and on about the joys of marriage, and kept saying he couldn't leave a young groom jobless.

In the depths of his head, Hiccup quietly said to himself, "Thanks Jack."

* * *

><p>"What do you think?" Baby Tooth said with a flare of her hand as she stepped out of her room, suited out in a sparkly, black dress and sequin headband to match.<p>

Jack brought a finger up to his lips in thought, cocking his head a little and narrowing his eyes. "So... What are you supposed to be?"

"I'm a flapper girl! You know, from the '20s?"

"It's Halloween, not the _Great Gatsby_."

"And?"

"I know you can get a better costume than that."

"Oh hush up! If you're such a costume expert, then what are you going to be?" She huffed, pursing her lips while she fixed the feather on her headband.

"I'm not dressing up."

She slapped her hand over her heart, leaned back, and gave him the most dramatic gasp she could manage. "_Ah_! No costume!? _You_? Of all people? Popsicle, I am _shocked_!"

"Hey now, don't hurt yourself. I don't want ya to have an aneurism."

"Jack, for each and every single year I have known you, you have _always_ dressed up for Halloween. You not dressing up is, like, one of the signs of the _apocalypse_!"

Baby Tooth hobbled towards the couch, crashing into the puffy cushions and leaned on his shoulder. She continued, "And you don't expect a pretty, young thing like me to go like this alone, do you?"

"Can you quit it with the dramatics, Audrey Hepburn? The performance is over. Take a bow, and pop some chill pills."

"Can you blame me? We're going to a costume party! Emphasis on _costume_. You better find something good to wear, or else."

He chuckled, "Or what?"

She stood up and pointed a finger directly in his face. "I will make your life a living hell."

"Aren't you doing that already?"

Baby Tooth grabbed the nearest pillow and whacked him across the head with it, before hobbling away in the tight dress back to her room. Jack couldn't help but snicker at the sight, because she was packed tighter than a little sausage in that outfit. It was adorable, really.

He lazily draped his right arm over the back of the lilac sofa, sighing with content in girl's warm apartment. It might've been overstuffed with feminine decor and reeked of perfume, but it was clean and cozy compared to his own home. Which was cold and dirty. Not that he cared anyway. The lad hummed with bliss, closing his eyes and falling back onto the squishy cushions, fiddling his thumbs together in thought.

"And what's got you in such a good mood today?" Baby Tooth called from her doorway, her dress replaced with pastel jeans and a graphic t-shirt.

Jack smiled and breathed, "I had a good time last night."

"What happened?" The girl questioned as she moved into the kitchen, grabbing the kettle out of one of the cabinets and filling it in the sink.

"Just went out with some friends."

"Without me?"

"Yep."

She hummed a '_hmp_ ', putting the kettle on the stove and turned it on, wiping her hands on her jeans. "So, what did you do?"

"Uh, hung out with that kid from the movies and his friends."

"You mean your gay lover?"

"Seriously? How many times do I have to tell you? I don't like guys."

"But, what about that time when you got drunk and made out with some dude with a lampshade on his head?"

"That wasn't a dude, it was a chick."

"Yeah, keep telling yourself that. It was a dude, he had stubble."

Jack turned his lips into a flat line, clearing his throat as he tugged on his purple tank top. "Well, I do stupid shit when I'm drunk."

"Or that time when-"

"Can we switch the topic?"

Baby Tooth stuck out her tongue at him, strutting into the living space and took a seat across from him on a puffy, taupe lounging chair. "Fine. So, are you going to see him again today?"

"Maybe. He said he had a job interview, though."

She slowly sat up like a corpse rising from its grave. "_Where_"

"Uh, like the Warren Art Musuem, I think."

A Cheshire Cat grin formed on her face, her eyes practically glowing with devilish delight. "Let's go bug him."

"Whoa. You're scaring me there, psycho."

"Come on, you know you want to."

"... Maybe."

"Alright then!" She hopped up from her spot like a cork. "Let's go!"

The girl pointed to the door, striding forward as she grabbed her cat-ear hoodie off the coatrack beside it.

"Yo, what about the stove?"

She kept the same pace as she flipped around, still pointing as she walked into the kitchen and turned off the stove, moving back towards the door. "Okay, now let's go!"

"Right behind you, Madame Nutjob."

"That's 'Your Royal Bitchy Highness' to you."

Both persons moved out the door, Baby Tooth clad in her frighteningly cute (some might say kawaii) hoodie with a crazed look on her facade, and Jack, with his hands in his back pockets and a slight smirk.

* * *

><p>"Thank you for your time, sir." Hiccup said, as he and the curator walked out of the small office.<p>

The large man patted his back and replied cheerily, "Thank you for coming in, Henrik! It was very nice meeting you. And congratulations on your upcoming nuptials!"

The boy's confidence bloomed as the man returned to his space and closed the door, leaving Hiccup alone in the waiting area. He was a shoe-in for the job and he just knew it! Mr. Ostern was absolutely ecstatic about Hiccup's "engagement." Yeah, it was kind of uncomfortable at first, but once Hiccup started on about his relationship and how he and Jack met, he won the old man over. He especially caught his interest when he mentioned the way Jack proposed to him. He didn't want to count his chickens before they hatched, but he was pretty damn sure he could claim the job as his, and his alone. It wasn't very ethical to get a job using one's relationship status, but the old man seemed more interested in Hiccup as a 'groom-to-be' instead of just another kid pining after the job.

He moved down the small staircase into the main building, moving straight into the Greek exhibit. The brunet walked past beautiful woman carved out of stone and brave warriors locked in battle for eternity. Mythology just happened to be one of his guilty pleasures, and fortunately for him, this place was crawling in it. Hideous harpies, vases covered in gods, and paintings of glorious warfare was enough to make him smile.

But he couldn't stay forever, because he had things to unpack and set up back home. So, he maneuvered his way out of the rooms and exhibits, and headed straight for the large doors, held open to invite visitors in.

"Excuse me sir, can you tell me about this painting?"

Hiccup turned this way and that to find the source of the voice, until his eyes fell on a head of white hair and a purple tank-top besides a colorful hoodie with cat ears and strands of rainbow hair, situated in front of a mirror on his right. He rolled his eyes and came closer, to find none other than Jack and Baby Tooth studying

their own reflections in the mirror's surface.

"Jack. That's not a painting. It's just you." He deadpanned.

The other male squinted and looked closer. "Oh, guess you're right."

The girl pipped up, "Are you sure? I mean, this does look like a very gorgeous painting."

"Pretty sure. What are you two doing here?"

"We came to bug you!" The girl flipped around, proudly smacking her hands on her hips.

"What?"

Jack shoved her over, wrapping an arm around her neck and slapped his hand over her mouth. "What this dork is trying to say is, we came to visit you."

"Oh, alright." He shrugged, giving back a meek grin, exposing the small gap in his teeth.

The girl managed to break out of the tattoo artist's clutches for a brief second and shouted, "And Jack wanted to ask you out!"

"Dude, shut up!" Jack practically put her in a choke-hold, while she snickered and snorted.

"Really?"

Both Jack and Baby Tooth turned to him, honest confusion forming on the tip of his tongue as well as a slight pink that dusted across his cheeks from the brisk air blowing in from the doorway. His eyes seemed to have a light shimmer, mixing vibrant viridian with flecks of bright green in that intelligent gaze that scanned over the both of them for an answer. God, he looked so cute. Not that Jack thought so, or anything.

"Uh, s-she's just kidding around-"

The girl giggled, "Nope! He came here to say he thinks you're cute and he wants to play tonsil hockey with you!"

"Quit your shit!"

Jack felt his cheeks burning underneath his pale skin, heat crawling down his neck all the way down to his toes. The brunet continued to observe as lewd comments and backlashes were exchanged, the albino looking like he walked in on his parents doing the horizontal mambo while she looked like some sort of adorable, teenage delinquent.

Hiccup finally broke their endless conversation of 'He wants to get in your pants!' and 'No! Shut up!' with, "Uh, you guys?"

Jack was practically strangling her at that point while she squeaked with laughter.

"Did you want to hang out or something?"

The blue-eyed male released his grip and let her collapse to the floor in a sea of breathless giggles. Composing himself by combing back his hair and tugging down his tank, Jack slowly turned back to him and stated diplomatically, "Yes, that sounds lovely."

"Coffee?"

Baby Tooth flipped over on her side, leaning on her hand. She answered, in her best 1940s starlet impression, "Coffee sounds great, love."

* * *

><p>The location for coffee today was simple. Just a small cafe nearby, with a simple atmosphere and monochromatic color scheme (mostly light browns and dull greens). Jack insisted on getting the drinks, which was a foolish choice on his part since he was at the end of the world's longest line, leaving the brunet alone with his best friend. I repeat leaving Hiccup alone with Baby Tooth, the mistress of blabbing. By the time Jack would get to the front, she would've already given the boy the keys to his apartment. _I shit you not._ She would have, in all seriousness, given the brunet Jack's keys, work schedule, and credit card number.

Looking out the window, Hiccup observed the humdrum movement of the city's inhabitants. Fog swam around each warm body, diving past each crevice and crawling along the ground; a slight chill hung in the air, nipping at innocent noses mercilessly and tinging ears red. It would be Halloween in a couple of weeks, and the people were showing off their ghoulish spirit. The scent of strong spices and pumpkin flavored coffees wafted out of every coffee house, and grinning jack-o'-lanterns adorned each window; costumes were proudly displayed for the upcoming holiday along with gory decor. Which of course included dismembered fingers, plastic zombie torsos, puddles of fake blood, etc. He wasn't very fond of the holiday, due to a few incidents involving his cousin and a few of his football buddies pranking him each and every year. He didn't want to get into specifics, but most of them involved stealing his candy, switching his homemade costumes with girls clothes, and jumping out of random places just to scare the crap out of him. Luckily, Snotlout was far across the ocean, and he was free to enjoy his first Halloween in America, _without_ his cousin.

The girl across the booth drummed her fingers on the table, a slight simper on her pink lips directed at the him. "_So_..." She began. "Hiccup..."

He turned back towards her. _Sweet Eir_, he did not like that look on her face. _Not one bit._ "Yes?"

"Are you single?"

"Um, yeah?"

"Ever been in a relationship?"

"Yeah. M-me and Astrid used to go out, actually."

"What's your favorite color?"

"Green."

"Favorite animal?"

"Do dragons count?"

"Yes."

"Then dragons."

"Favorite time of year?"

"Autumn."

"Mhmm..." She hummed, closing her eyes and nodding as she leaned back. This was like one weird version of 20 questions. Humming to the tune of "_Pumped Up Kicks_" playing over the radio, she folded her hands neatly on the table, face beaming innocently. For such a cute, colorful bird, she sure was nosy. Not to mention a little scary.

"_Are you freakin' serious?!_" Jack could be heard groaning when a woman at the counter took out a small plastic bag of coins to pay for her \$5.62 cup of coffee and muffin, counting out pennies and nickels.

Hiccup had to bite his lip to keep him from laughing out loud. While, on the other hand, Baby Tooth released a boisterous snigger, earning herself a certain hand gesture (one involving a _specific finger_) from the male across the room.

Wiping a tear from underneath her eye, she leaned closer to the brunet and smiled. "Can you believe he's single?"

Hiccup let out a silent laugh, "You can't be serious."

"Yep. Old _Jacky-Boy_ over there is still a bachelor. I still can't understand why. Maybe it's his trashed apartment that's scaring away all the potential dates."

"I don't think that's a legitimate reason."

"No. _Believe me_. It looks like the president dropped the A-bomb in his place."

From across the room, Jack shouted over the other voices, "Hey! Can you shut the hell up?"

"Well, maybe it's not that bad, but still. I've been in there and I swear to God, I've seen things _crawling_ on the wall."

Unable to hold it in anymore, Hiccup snorted and hunched over the table.

With a cardboard tray of plain white coffee cups in both of his hands, Jack dashed over to the table and leered at her, to which she only laughed harder. Yanking out a cup, he shoved it in her hands and

pushed her over, his eye twitching.

The male leaned forward and whispered, "Please, dear god, don't tell me she told you anything."

Hiccup could only shake his head, trying to stifle the laughter but it was difficult because of the facial expressions Baby Tooth was making. Grabbing a cup for himself, Jack gave her the deadliest glare in the history of mankind. If only looks could kill, she would've been dead a very long time ago...

"You know, Jack, your little boyfriend here has been telling me some interesting things." The girl sing-songed, taking a bird-like sip of the burning liquid.

Before Jack could even get a word out, Hiccup interrupted with, "Not boyfriend, I'm his 'fiancÃ©.'"

"Pardon?"

"Oh, and that reminds me. I should be thanking you, Frost-bite, your stupid proposal stunt may have gotten me a job."

Jack could feel the glassy stare of Baby Tooth slide over to him, a toothy grin shimmering on her round cheeks like a shark's set of blood-stained fangs. People passing by would've probably mistaken her for the bride of Chucky. Or a really realistic Halloween decoration.

"Ahem, care to explain, Snowflake?"

Taking a long sip of his drink and stretching, he yawned, "I-I have no idea what your talking about."

"Oh, I'm sure you do. Come on now, spit it out."

Resting his cheek on the palm of his left hand, Hiccup smirked, "Jack 'proposed' to me yesterday in front of a group of protestors. So, now everyone thinks we're engaged."

Blinking and biting her lip with a crooked grin, Baby Tooth wrapped an arm around the tattoo artist's neck. Chuckling like a sea-witch, she practically sang, "Oh! I can't believe my little boy's getting hitched! I better be the maid of honor!"

"Hell no! You're gonna be the piÃ±ata!"

"Does that mean I get candy?"

"Yeah, just let me stuff it up your-"

"Whoa there, Elton! I've got to ask, is this a shotgun wedding?"

"Huh?"

Turning over to Hiccup, she leaned in and whispered, "Are you pregnant? Did you forget to take the pill, or did the condom break?"

"Uh..."

"Don't worry, I'm sure we can get this done fast, before the baby comes."

Jack looked ready to burst, his skin an unholy shade of red comparable to the fiery depths of hell. The girl turned to the window, going on about buying a proper wedding dress and tux, and footsie pajamas for the imaginary baby. She cried fake tears, squealing over how cute it was going to be, chanting an endless mantra of potential names whilst declaring herself the god-mother. Well, this conversation had completely careened off track towards some unfathomable tangent of _god-knows-what_.

Underneath her squeaks and chirps, Jack tapped the brunet's knee and pointed straight for the exit, to which Hiccup nodded like crazy. Both males slid out of the booth when she suggested calling the child '_Little Beatrice_', and escaped just as she turned back to face them.

"-But if it's a boy, then we should call him- _huh?_ Where'd you two go?"

Watching both males fly out the glass doors and dash down the sidewalk, her disappointed frown slowly condensed into a huge simper. Her plan had worked _perfectly_.

Yes, she had planned the entire thing: convince Jack to see his little boy-toy, bug the crap out of them, and get them to run off, just the two of them. She loved bugging Jack, but she wasn't _that_ insane! Satisfied with her good deed of the day, Baby Tooth lounged back and took a long sip of her coffee, patting herself on the back.

Good work, Baby Tooth, you've done good.

* * *

><p>Free from the confines of the stuffy coffee shop, both boys were liberated by the crisp air swimming throughout the city, slowly egging on winter in a sluggish march. Soft smiles graced both their faces, as they kept a calm pace down the sidewalk, moving like ice cubes in comparison to the busy-bee rush surrounding them on all sides. Like some sort of festive, October tidal wave that they just happened to be caught in the middle of.<p>

"I'm sorry about that. She can get a bit _eccentric_ sometimes." Jack rubbed the back of his neck, tugging the front of his top once his arm fell back down.

Shrugging, Hiccup chuckled, "_Really?_ I didn't notice."

"Well, just be careful around her. She'll literally talk your ear off. Believe me."

A small blast of air pushed past them, ruffling strands of white hair and locks of auburn, rattling the clothes on their backs like white flags. Shivering, the brunet tucked his arms in his coat's pockets, burying himself up to his nose in the striped scarf around his neck. With chattering teeth, he eyeballed Jack from the corner of his eye.

"Aren't you cold?"

Huffing, Jack puffed out his chest and held his head up high. "Me? Cold? _Ha!_ I'm the harbinger of winter, _I never get cold!_"

"Then why are you shivering?"

"Shivering?" The albino shot a quick glance down to his arms crawling with goosebumps, shaking slightly when another strong breeze rolled by. "Pfft, I'm fine. I can't even feel it."

"Yeah, no. _Here_."

Hiccup unwrapped the scarf and tossed it to Jack, his freckled skin now exposed to Burgess's cruel cold. Just as the older male was about to deny the offer, Hiccup turned to him and wrapped the material tightly around his pale neck, clearly stating that he had _plenty_ of scarves back home. And Jack couldn't really say no. How could he? With that round face dotted with a plethora of endless freckles, like a map of the constellations, and pools of sweet green looking directly at him? _Christ_, this kid was cute.

"Ugh, why is this covered in cat hair?!" Jack sneezed when a few of the black hairs rubbed against his nose.

"Sorry. That's from my cat, Toothless."

"What kind of name is _Toothless_?"

"Hey, I found him when he was a kitten. He didn't have any teeth, so _Toothless_ seemed appropriate."

Jack slowed his pace and looked over to Hiccup, narrowing his eyes. "Hmm, now that I think about it... You _do_ seem like a cat person. So what kind of cat is he?"

"I'm not really sure actually. He's a mix between domestic and wild."

He halted in his tracks for a split second, before catching up to the younger male. "_Wild?_ You have a _wildcat_ for a pet?"

"Only half wild. And yes, back home, there were wildcats crawling everywhere."

"Whoa, care to explain?"

Hiccup adjusted his eyes back onto Jack, seeing genuine interest engraved on his features. "Yeah. All sorts of wildcats. There were mostly groups of strays and small wild ones. Other times, there were huge mountain lions."

"So, did you fight them off Viking style?"

He giggled, "No, not really. I mean, _yeah_ we had to ward them off, but not with swords or anything. They'd get into barns and kill livestock, or break into shops and steal food. So, my dad and other villagers would spend their day trying to figure out ways to get rid of 'em."

"I'm guessing your dad isn't a cat person then."

"He doesn't really mind them anymore, actually."

"Sudden change of heart?"

"That's a story for another time... So, what about you, hmm?"

"_Me?_ Eh, nothing interesting about me, really."

"Nothing interesting? Come on, you must be joking."

"Nope. Sometimes I rob banks, pillage local villages, and cast winter storms on innocent bystanders. You know, the _usual_. But, nothing interesting really."

The brunet gave him a smile, warm and simple, but it made Jack feel like he just won the lottery. There was just something so wonderful about that crooked grin. Everything was wonderful about Hiccup. The way his eyes lit up like fireworks, that little gap in his teeth too cute to resist, and that shaggy head of hair he just wanted to run his fingers through. Okay, maybe (_just maybe_), Jack may have thought Hiccup was somewhat attractive.
Somewhat.

"Jack?"

"Yeah?"

"Why are you staring at me like that?"

"_Oh! _Sorry._" The white-haired boy faced straight forward, burying his nose in the scarf that smelled of old boxes and pine trees. "Um, you know what? I think I should be heading off, I've got to go to the bank. You wanna tag along?"

"That's sounds interesting, but I just realized I left my friends alone in the apartment, and I'm pretty sure they're riffling through my private things, so I want to stop them before they find the _severed heads_ and _blood-stained_ _aprons_."

"I knew it. You're a serial killer. You're not gonna sneak into my place and skin me while I'm sleeping, right?"

"Nah, you'd be the _last_ on my list of potential victims."

"I don't know if I should be flattered or concerned."

"Both. Well, I guess this goodbye, huh?"

The brunet offered him a 'later' with a smile, but Jack could never really accept that as a farewell, so he stepped closer and gave the boy a quick hug around the waist. Instead of just hanging there like a limp noodle, Hiccup actually returned the gesture, which (quite frankly) he wasn't expecting. But it was _awesome_ nonetheless.

* * *

><p>A day had passed since then, and ever since, Jack had been on cloud 9. He came to work early, which was totally odd since he was

always late. Not to mention he actually called Aster by his real name, instead of using 'bunny-boy' or '_egg-sucker_' like he usually did. With a permanent grin and lax attitude, he was on top of the world and nothing could bring him down.

"I really wanna love somebody, I really wanna dance the night away, I know we're only half way there, but you can take me all the way, you can take me all the way~" Jack sang over the buzzing of his needle, serenading his customer who snickered as the instrument dug into her thigh. This time, his fingers skipped around like delicate spiders, bringing to life a tattoo of a curvaceous pinup girl, complete with curly black hair and lacy lingerie.

"Can you quit that, Snowman?" Aster growled from across the room with his customer, eyebrows twitching.

Jack sang even louder, "I really wanna touch somebody, I think about you every single day, I know we're only half way there, but you can take me all the way, you can take me all the way!" _

"Mate, I swear to God, I'm going to shove this _so_ far up your ass you'll feel it in your throat." He waved around his needle for emphasis. When Aster said it, _he_ _meant it_.

The Russian entered the room and chimed, "Calm down, Bunny! Jack is in good mood, do not be such a, how do you say, _stick in the mud_."

The grey-haired male glowered, cleaning off the needle before dipping it in another color and continuing with his work.

"So what has you so happy today, Jack?"

"Nothing."

"Really? By look on your face, I'd say you are in _love_."

Toothiana popped her head through the curtain, lips pursed and eyes wide like an excited grade-schooler. "Ooh, Jack!" She stepped nearer, twiddling her fingers. "Does someone have the _love bug_?"

North leaned in closer to him and waggled his eyebrows. "So, who is the lucky lady? Is she pretty?"

"Uh... Yeah, he- I mean _she's_ kinda cute."

The colorful woman hopped onto a nearby stool, crossing her legs. "Well, you should bring her by! I'd love to meet the little cutie who's got your attention."

Aster groaned, "For the _love of god_, no. Knowing the _Ice Lolly_ over here, I suspect she's just another bimbo he picked up during one of his drunken escapades."

"Hey! He's- I mean _she's_ not!"

Mumbling under his breath, the grey male added, "Whatever."

"When you have time, bring her around! I would love to meet the girl who has stolen my boy's heart!" The Claus-doppelg nger announced

proudly, walking out of the room towards his office in the back, past the lounge. Once he got in there, that's when the fun began. The lights were turned on, illuminating the red room in colorful spectrums from his mosaic lamp whilst he turned on his old stereo behind his desk. Immediately, a woman with a pair of strong lungs sang in an opera-esque style, thick with Russian words.

His own accent began singing the loud song in his native tongue, proudly belting out each word the woman sang with the same finesse. The music was loud enough to be heard outside the office space, in the entire shop, and outside; people walking by were starting to get the impression Russia had invaded. As for the patrons, they giggled along with the workers, all except for Aster. His eye twitched a bit as he stopped his work halfway to glare at nothing in particular when North hit a particularly high note. _Good Lord_...

The singing was cut short, much to his delight, when the phone on North's desk was loud enough to be heard over him. The Russian lowered the volume on his stereo to a decent level before picking it up and answering, "Ah! Northern Lights Tattoo Shop, this is Nicholas St. North speaking. How may I be of service?"

"...Just the man I was looking for. You know, you should really consider getting a new receptionist, yours has quite the _bite_." The voice on the other line hissed in a distinct English accent.

The contents of his stomach sunk and fizzled, along with his cheery attitude. He spoke back in a dark tone, "_Pitch?"_

"Ah, what a charming nickname you've given me, but, I suppose it's better than '_Boogey Man_'."

The music was turned off completely at that point, and he allowed his words to become bitter with venom, "Look here, I said for you to stop calling."

"Hmph, calm down old man. You're going to raise your _blood pressure_ if you keep talking like that."

"This conversation is over." North was about to drop the phone back down on the desk and be done with the whole affair when he heard, "But, before you do..." coming from the other line. The telephone was hovering above the table, still firmly grasped in his crushing hand. Against his better judgment, he raised it back to his ear and seethed, "_What?"_

"Hm? Oh, yes. I just want you to know, you can't keep avoiding me forever...I _always_ get what I want. Goodbye."

North slammed the device back down as quickly as he could, cracking the plastic in the process, the sound of Pitch's laughter echoing in his eardrums like thunder. Kozmotiz Pitchiner was many things; he was _egotistical_, _cruel_, and _unrelenting_. Most of all, he wouldn't give up until he got what he wanted. And that made the old man sick to his soul.

A small set of gentle knocks on his front door shook him out of his anger, and he looked up to see Sandy watching him with concern along with a sheepish wave. The little man motioned with his fingers, "Are you okay?"

"Yes, yes, I'm fine."

"Do you want me to get you anything?"

The bearded man thought the question over carefully, before simply stating, "Get me the vodka."

The other's eyes popped wide open, and he quickly signed back, "I don't think that's such a good idea."

"Right now it is..._We're going to have company."_

Taking the hint, the stout man nodded and left to retrieve the harsh beverage without any hesitation. Looks like trouble was beginning to bubble up from the past, and there was nothing he could do to help, besides getting his friend a hard drink. Hell, everyone could use one.

* * *

><p>Notes: 'Ostern' actually translates to 'Easter', if you didn't know.<p>

This chapter was mostly used for transitioning, so the next chapter will have more content and will probably be easier to write. And I'm skipping a few days here and there because I don't want to take up too much time. This was supposed to be finished before/during the start of October, but my muse is still as fickle as ever.

Please pardon this pooppy thing. I haven't been feeling very well as of late, and I do hope you all can forgive me.

On a side note, I've opened up a deviantart account, so if you want to talk to me there, you can. Just look up 'thehijackzombie'.

5. Chapter 5

Hello there! I am not dead! I'm extremely sorry for being on such a long and unnecessary hiatus, but my motivation to write had been kaput. I suppose it's because I relied heavily on being alone so much, and when I found someone, my creative output just died out. It wasn't right of me to rely on loneliness as a muse, and I apologize, and lucky for me, I have found another.

So without further ado, I give you the latest installment of Northern Lights

Disclaimer: characters belong to Dreamworks, and I am just a wee baby
â-•3â-•

Edit: something went a bit wonky with the uploading so I pretty much had to rewrite the entire thing. I'm very tired right now, so there is a possibility of there being a mistake or two. I apologize and I'll try my best to fix any when I can.

* * *

><p>Pulp Fiction<p>

Today was the day, and he was ready. Any nervousness was tucked beneath a debonair poker face, and covered in false collected coolness. He was finally going to do it! Today was the day! And how was he going to do it?...

... He didn't have a clue.

The stout man released a silent sigh, fixing the golden tie around his neck and brushing small debris off his overcoat. Walking directly in front of one of The Mermaid's Den's large windows, he gave himself a long once-over. He tried tugging the little wrinkles in his clothes out, only to have them reappear, and tried to comb down his hair, which wouldn't cooperate and maintained its usual spiky position. It was now or never.

He stepped inside the nautical cafe, keeping his head held high in artificial confidence. Giving a simple nod to a few of the waitresses, he approached the counter with the target just ahead. It was like a game of Black-Ops, just on a less deadly scale.

He approached with the stealth of an assassin while the "target" had her back to him, humming as she wrote on a small pad. In his mind, he could practically hear some man whisper in an imaginary earpiece, "Don't blow this, Sandman. You're almost there. Just take out the target, then we're home free, amigo. I swear if you get through this alive, I'm buying you a beer."

Looking over the counter, since he was barely tall enough to peer over it anyway, the little man tapped on it to get the target's (or should I say, the owner's) attention. Hearing the light noise, the woman spun around, her fiery red hair flipping with the cinematic grace of a movie star, as her wistful eyes fell on him.

"Why Sanderson Mansnoozie! Is that you I see?" She chimed with an airy chuckle, her eyes crinkling like bird's feet.

Getting a full look at her from this angle, any and all confidence he attempted to build up came crashing down into a squishy mess. Her peachy skin was dotted here and there with the occasional freckle from too much exposure to the sun, while her eyes had a never-ending spark that twinkled like sparklers in the rain, and although she showed some signs of aging, she managed to do it in the most graceful manner a human being could.

"Uh... Sandy, love? Why you staring at me like I'm the boogie man, or something?"

Tawny eyes wide and mouth slightly agape, he cleared his throat and tried to look a tad more gentlemanly, which was difficult since he was comparable to a dying fish. Raising his hands above the counter, he slowly signed (since she barely knew sign language), "Can we talk private?"

Watching and nodding carefully, she released an 'ah' and pointed to a booth by the wall. Once seated across from each other and out of sight, she leaned in a little, whispering, "Why you being secretive? Are you a spy or something?"

Chuckling, he signed, "Wanted to ask you question."

"Wanted to ask... Oh! Alright then, go ahead."

Oh god... Sandy's nerves were set to explode, not to mention the inside of his stomach felt like a butterfly habitat. He could almost feel them crawl around if he focused hard enough. This was his one chance and if he blew it... He didn't even want to think about what could happen. Maybe she'd laugh in his face, or make fun of him behind his back for trying. But she'd never do that...

... Would she?

He just sat there puffing out his cheeks while staring at his feet, stretching out his fingers like he was about to whip out a gun, a look on his face that practically read 'Hey look at me! I murdered a dozen people and left the bodies in my basement!'

"Darling, you look awful sick. Want me to get you a ginger-ale or something?" She voiced, her red lips pursing in concern.

"No! No!" He quickly shook out of nervous fingers. "I wanted to ask..."

"... Ask me what?"

"If you..."

"Yes?"

With cheeks full to bursting and nerves tingling to the point the swore he was vibrating in his seat, he signed like a madman, "If you wanted to go out some time?"

She stared at him blankly, one of her brows slightly curving as she repeated the signals to herself in mumbles.

"If I wanted to... To what? I'm sorry love, I couldn't really understand the rest."

Both of his hands went straight to his face in a sound slap, before he frantically looked around for a slip of paper, and silently cheered when he found a lone napkin on the edge of the table. He moved it in front of him and dug his hand into every pocket he had, the look on his face switching from pure determination to distraught when he couldn't find what he was looking for.

Nervously, he signed, "Pen?"

"... Pen? Oh, do you need a pen?" Pulling the one out of her front pocket, she handed it to him with a sweet grin. "Here you go, sugar."

Frantically, he covered the paper with one hand as the other scrawled messy words and occasionally shook the instrument when the ink stopped flowing, biting his lip once he finished. Handing the pen back to her, he cautiously slid the napkin towards her, facing the other direction once she had it.

Reading the words out loud, she murmured, "Would you like to go out some time?"

The silence that fell was too much to bear for the little man as he sat there, awaiting his fate. This situation was comparable to waiting for the executioner to hurry it up and let the axe fall down on his neck. He wanted to bury himself, somewhere a hundred miles away, at the bottom of the ocean, in a box covered in chains where no one could ever-

"Oh, Sandy. You've got me blushing like a rose bud." She mimicked a shy southern belle, "That was awful sweet of you."

He just stared back at her in disbelief, a long rush of air coming out of his lungs making him deflate like a balloon. Since when was he holding his breath?

"I'd love to. How 'bout we head out around 9:00, after I lock up?"

With shaky fingers, he said, "Y-yes."

"Fantastic! Then I will see you tonight, honeybun~"

She stood up and gave him a peck on the cheek, leaving a huge red mark on his face, before giving him a quick wave goodbye and walking into the kitchen.

Over his invisible earpiece, he heard that imaginary voice boom, "Alright Sandman! You did it! Now let's haul our asses on outta here. Heh, looks like I owe you a drink, huh?"

* * *

><p>Lives were like stories. Page after page, chapter after chapter, a never ending sequence of long, summer days and cold, winter nights. Each hour became a sentence, each minute a word, and every second a form of punctuation. Life is the longest book to ever be written, each book different from the last, in the library of the universe. Some stories were lost to time, others ended too early, while some haven't been written yet. But truth be told, a life was nothing more than a long sequence of memories. Fate foresaw the creation and publishing of these memories, drawings bridges between time and making necessary sacrifices. It was fate that placed people in their own lives and gave them a story to create. It was also fate who weaved bonds between individuals, linking their tales together, turning multiple poems into one epic. Fate would birth and destroy new writers with new lives and new memories, and in its wake, would lead them into their own destiny.<p>

Alas, not all memories could be so blissful.

In the vast dark, stretched a hallway with windows on either side dusted in a fine layer of frost. The ground was numbing beneath a pair of small, bare feet as they trekked along as silent as the wind. Dull light collected in stale wisps on the dusty ground, tracing each individual mark the plump, dirty toes made. A boy carefully moved along, through the repetition of window after window; he held back his breaths as best as he could to avoid detection. When the end was finally reached, he turned the corner to see that in a large lunchroom, he was surrounded by dead faces.

Each one was a child's face, hollow and devoid of hope. It was like they were each small bathtubs filled to the brink with wonder and color, but someone pulled the plug and didn't bother to fill them back up. They all looked like holograms set on repeat, standing or sitting perfectly still, the only motions being blink and breathe. And when looked at by a certain angle, they were all see-through, practically pale ghosts withering away into nothing more but piles of ash. The boy stared at each one, but they couldn't even see him as he tip-toed past abandoned toys, dirtied and abused.

He went further, down another hall just as plain as the last. But every step he took changed slightly, as concrete became softer and crunched like snow and boring windows gained gaping cracks. Random debris littered the space, including rocks that stubbed his pale feet, or button-eyed dolls that tried to charm him with artificial smiles. At the end of the hall grew a rusted door, solidified by ice growing around it and snow piled high on both sides. The wind became horrendously bitter and nipped at him like angry pixies, commanding him to go back.

But he stayed. He stayed and looked at the door with its old carvings of planets and suns permanently embedded in its faded flesh, and the large full moon that stared back at him, daring him to venture into its domain and discover what dwelled behind the entrance. The boy raised a hand to push it open, until a voice drifted into the mist and beguiled him away, towards the soothing sound of, "Jack... Jack... Come find me!..." In such a weak, innocent voice.

He could only turn and look for it as the voice grew nearer, "Jack... Come get me... I need you..." The boy lifted his feet to run, but invisible hands held him down as the voice cried desperately, "Jack!... Please!... I'm scared!"

"Mary!" Jack screamed as his head popped off the pillow. His lungs burned for icy breath to fill his deprived body, while the pupils in his brown eyes shrank to the size of pinpoints. Jack looked around the room and tried to identify where he was.

He recognized the dresser on the far left, the bathroom door on the right, and everything else in his bedroom. He could only sigh in relief as he tried to calm his stammering heart. He hopped out of the sheets, traces of cold sweat sticking to his flesh as he moved in to the bathroom for an icy shower to dull away the nightmare.

The temperature continued to drop as the days passed, the frigid taste of autumn diminishing and becoming crisp with ice crystals. He could practically taste them on the tip of tongue once he got out and moved near the window. The sky burned a bright blue, dotted with puffy clouds like a spilled bag of cotton balls across the azure expanse, each one a different shade of white or grey as they lazily drifted in the sky. The youth looked at them and smiled while he pulled on a pair of boxers, because clouds meant snow. My god, he was positively crazy about snow! By the end of the month the weather was sure to change from raindrops to snowflakes. Snow meant playing outside with the neighborhood kids, spending the holidays with his friends, and especially pulling nasty pranks (specifically on a certain man by the name of Bunnymund...).

Today was Saturday, a great day to be alive. Mostly because Saturday mornings were dedicated to an endless variety of videogames, and the

nights were reserved for plenty of drinks and the occasional one night stand. So, he tossed on a Ghostbusters t-shirt, a pair of jeans, and didn't even bother to put in his blue contacts as he made his way into the living room. He had plenty of time before work started and he could always eat breakfast later, because right now it was gaming time.

There, shining like a beacon of nerdy goodness on the coffee table, was his copy of Assassin's Creed III, glowing in some divine light. He grabbed it and purred on his way over to his gaming system, "Oo baby, I'm gonna play you so hard today..." The fact that this man talked dirty to his games was just further proof of how lonely he was. A few nights ago, he practically made love to his copy of Borderlands. On the kitchen counter. But before the molestation could commence, a man began singing from his kitchen.

"Chestnuts roasting on an open fire, Jack Frost nipping at your nose..." _

Quirking a brow at the random dulcet tones of Christmas music, he whipped his head over to the kitchen to see his phone vibrating across the counter. A Christmas themed ringtone could only mean one person. Quickly grabbing it, Jack was greeted with the cheery grin of North on the screen, and even more music. Upon unlocking it, he was surprised by the triumphant laugh of the man's strong Russian voice.

"Ah! Good morning Jack!" He nearly sang.

Groggily, the youth ran his hand down his face, replying with a yawn. "Ugh, g-good morning, North. Why you calling so early? Work doesn't start till-"

"I know, I know. I called because I have favor to ask of you."

"Favor?"

"Remember? You owe me favor, so get dressed and come meet me at my house."

"Right now?! Come on, I wanted to-"

"Quit with the complaining, and get over here unless you want me to make you work for Bunnymund the entire day?"

"Got it! On my way..."

The man hung up with a chuckle, leaving Jack grimacing like a grade-schooler about to serve detention. Not exactly how he wanted to spend his Saturday morning, but with the threat of working for Bunny lingering in the air, Jack was willing to do anything.

* * *

><p>One of the many great things about Nicholas St. North was that he lived in the same neighborhood as Jamie Bennett and his young cohorts. Even though he qualified as an adult, Jack loved to hang out with the neighborhood kids since they all knew how to have fun unlike most of his peers, not to mention they actually listened to him,

since everyone else apparently couldn't. He was the pack leader of this little cult dedicated to snowball fights and pillow forts, ghost stories and pranks, and all the wonders of childhood.<p>

But, instead of being able to swing by and give a quick hello, he dragged his sorry ass over to North's humble abode for a favor he owed to the old man. And by humble abode, I mean sprawling two-story dream factory worthy of Santa Claus himself. Although his house was the same size of the others on the street, his outshone every single one by a mother-fudging landslide. Wild peppermint overtook the spaces below almost every window, which were all painted gold in elaborate designs; the scent of sugar cookies somehow managed to coat the entire property, even if no one had baked that day. The grass was horrifically lush and green, bringing all other lawns to shame, while his red brick chimney at the back puffed out pure, white clouds that smelled disgustingly sweet.

Jack stalked along the sidewalk and yawned. Once in front of the house, he took a sharp turn onto the concrete path towards the porch, eyes half-open and droopy. Before he could even reach up to knock, North tossed the door open, balancing trays of baked goods in one hand.

"Glad to see you're here, Jack! Now you get to help me!" He laughed, his cheeks and the tip of his nose rosy red.

Eye twitching, Jack averted his gaze to the man, the food, and back. He could feel a tidal wave of warmth rush over him along with the scent of frosting.

"Huh... You've been busy."

"Yes, yes, now come in!"

Ushered inside by a hand as big as his head, the scent of baked goods practically slapped him across the face when North closed the door and rushed back into the kitchen. From the doorway, he could see trays upon trays of cookies decorated in orange and black, shaped like pumpkins or cats.

"So, uh, what've you been up to, North?" He asked, stepping closer to snatch a hot cookie off a plate on the counter.

"I've been busy making preparations." The older man said, pulling out another tray onto the counter to cool. In total, there was about four trays, filled with sugary confections, and two humongous plates dusted with them in flashy Halloween colors.

"For what, exactly?" He took a small bite, dropping a few sprinkles in the process.

"For the bake sale, of course!"

"Bake sale?"

"Yes, we are having a bake sale for the Burgess Elementary School!"

Munching on the squishy confection, Jack nodded and asked, "Think there'll be anything left for the shop?"

"Of course! Except, I do not think Tooth will be very happy to see them."

"You kidding?! The second you bring a cookie in there, she'll be on you faster than a damn cheetah."

Chuckling, North opened the oven and popped in two cake pans overflowing with peachy batter. Wiping his hands on a tattered kitchen towel, the man leaned back against the counter and grabbed a cookie for himself.

Swallowing the last bit, Jack wiped away stray crumbs and cleared his throat. "So, what? You called me over here to watch you bake cookies?"

"No. I have something better in mind." North put down the cookie and grinned wickedly, pointing to the living room. "Come with me, please."

Doing as instructed, Jack trailed along behind the large man who seemed way too cheery today. They walked past the living room and into the parlor at the back; the old man opened a door which led to his garage/workshop. Despite having been in there many times before, Jack still couldn't believe how big the room was, since the view from the outside did the place no justice whatsoever. A roomy table littered with half-made toys took up the entire right wall, along with any tools he had, while the left side was reserved for North's prized possession: a 1957 red corvette convertible.

The lad began, "So, what do you want-"

"I want you to wash my car."

Jack slowly turned to the old man who crossed his arms and nodded, that cheery smile never wavering.

"You can't be serious."

"I am."

"But it's cold out there!"

"I thought you liked the cold?"

"Haven't you ever heard of a car wash?"

"Yes, but I think you can do a much better job."

North hit the switch on the nearby wall to open the garage door, letting chilly air creep in like invisible ice. Stammering, Jack turned to the old man to add in another protest, but instead got a rag tossed in his face, and a bucket complete with sponge dropped in his palm, along with the keys to the car.

"Not too much wax, okay? And don't scratch paint, I want to show off car to the fellas." The Claus-doppelgänger said with a wave of his hand as he headed back inside and closed the door behind him, still grinning maniacally.

Well, a deal was a deal, and Jack was starting to regret ever making it. The keys were put into the vintage car's ignition, eliciting a lion roar and a long kitten purr from the engine as it was pulled back into the driveway. Bringing the top up, he took out the keys with a sigh and set to work. He found liquid soap and carnauba wax set out on a nearby bench, along with a note which read, "_Don't forget the tires - North_."

Did the old man plan this?

The bucket was filled with water colder than a witch's tit, soaking the sponge completely to the point Jack swore he saw it shiver. He practically poured half the bottle of soap in there, creating a thick layer of pure bubbles. Rolling his hoodie's sleeves up, Jack dunked the sponge in the frothy mixture, soaking his own hand to the bone in chilly liquid.

Staring at it, he released a strong sigh and mumbled to himself, "Note to self: never makes deals with North, ever again."

* * *

><p>Gleaming like a sign of ghoulish delight from a pinboard in the dentist's office, was a poster for an upcoming event at the end of the month, which would be in a few days. It was decorated in pumpkin orange and licorice black, wielding a wicked ferris wheel in the middle with a deliciously evil grin adorning its face.<p>

It was for the annual Burgess Autumn Carnival, and Baby Tooth couldn't have been more excited. She and Jack had gone very single year they'd been together, on Halloween, right after the costume party they always attended the night previous. It was actually during one of these festivities when she first saw Jack.

It was back in middle school, when she remained attached to a small clique of chatty birds hellbent on being the most popular, the examples being charm-covered cell phones with large phone bills, and excessive amounts of boys dated then dumped.

She had been coerced into attending the carnival by sugar-laden lies about 'how much fun it was gonna be' and 'all the cute boys that'll be there'. Well, the second they arrived, she had been ditched and left to rot by the game booths. As she stalked around for something to do, which was difficult since she only had \$15 dollars, she managed to find a boy with chestnut hair and eyes to match sitting by the ferris wheel, all alone. She remembered how sad and abandoned he looked, a hollow look imprinted on his face as if he lived through WWI. Before she could even walk over to say hello, he scurried away to watch the fireworks being held near the field.

They didn't become friends until a few years later, in high school, when Jack pushed her out of the path of an oncoming bus, but that's a story for another time. After that, they were like two peas in a pod, and Baby Tooth absolutely could not wait to spend this year's carnival together. Especially since there was boy-candy involved.

While she sat in the break room, sipping some mint tea as a few of the dentists bickered over last night's boxing match, she ran such devious plans in that dark little head of hers. Baby Tooth may be

short and adorable, but she could come up with ideas frightening enough to shake Hannibal Lecter.

A new player had come into the giant board game of life, who was cute and available, and completely unaware of the fact that he was going to lose. No one beats Baby Tooth at her own game. No one. And if Cupid couldn't lead her friend and this newcomer down the right path, then she was going to go ahead and roll the dice, play the card, and have them land directly on the 'Marriage' square.

For the past few days, Jack talked about nothing but the freckled Dragon Boy and every little thing about him. He mentioned about his cat, and his wicked tattoos, and the dorky faces he makes. He was being worse than a fangirl. Jack had noticed the most peculiar little things that just fascinated him in the oddest fashions, which was startling to say the least. Jack had never done that to anyone else. Not even the girls he used to date. So, what did he see in this kid anyway?

To put it in Layman's terms: he was crushing hard. Jack had a huge crush and was completely oblivious about it. Baby Tooth knew everything there was to know about her dork of a friend. She knew he was upset when he pulled his hoodie over his head. She knew he was happy when he stretched his arms behind his neck. And she knew when he was up to something when he looked away from her and smirked. She knew every little mannerism and movement he made, so it wasn't hard to tell that he had a crush.

So how exactly was she to go about this? I mean, this was a delicate situation that required planning and preparation. But most of all, she needed a stroke of luck. Things like this were never easy to pull off.

Why did she insist on playing Cupid with them? Well, for one thing, Jack hadn't been in a real relationship in forever and he could use some stability in his life.

"Hmm..." She hummed to herself, taking a sip from her mug with a pearly tooth adorning it.

She averted her eyes back to the poster, that ferris wheel's toothy grin never wavering. Her eyes popped open like fire crackers and she could've sworn a lightbulb just exploded over her head.

"Mm, this is gonna be the best Halloween ever..." She chuckled darkly.

The bickering dentists stopped to look at her, to which she sucked in her lips and took another sip of her tea before getting up and awkwardly shuffling out of the room.

* * *

><p>Jamie Bennett and his fellow cohorts were greeted by a most unusual sight during their walk around the neighborhood. As they trekked by Mr. North's house, they found a familiar head of white hair and blue hoodie with the sleeves rolled up washing a bright, red car in the driveway.<p>

"... Is that Jack?" Asked one of the twins.

All members stopped to look, with smiles growing on their faces and laughter beginning to bubble up in their bellies, as the young man cussed and mumbled while scrubbing the car's hull in small, frothy circles.

Jaime began to snicker, "Pfft... J-Jack, is that you?"

The look of horror that grew upon the guy's face was priceless to say the least. The way he slowly turned his head and let his eyes wander over each of them liked a scared animal made them burst out cackling like a pack of hyenas.

"Dude, what are you doing?!" Pippa snorted out, clutching onto her stomach.

With the utmost grace he could possibly muster in a situation like this, Jack stood at full height and said, "It turns out North is secretly a karate master and he's teaching me how to fight, so I can defend myself from the snooty rich kids."

"Haha, what!" Squealed another.

"Haven't any of you ever heard of the Karate Kid? You know? Mr. Miagi? Wax on, wax off?"

Everyone slowly shook their head.

"Ah geez... Well, if you guys help me then maybe I can show you the movie."

"Is it any good?"

"It is a classic." He proudly stated, scrubbing behind the mirror with a squeak.

"But why are you washing Mr. North's car for?" Someone shouted.

"'Cause I'm so awesome, that's why. Come on, if you help, I'll rent you guys any movies you want... Nothing rated R though."

The chance to see horror films and adult comedies was much too tempting, so with a look casted to each other, the group silently agreed and grabbed a rag from the garage.

When North came outside a while later, he was surprised to see the neighborhood children on top and underneath his car, polishing it with old rags until the red automobile shined with an unholy aura of sublimity. Each little head turned to him like a lot of kittens, Jack's head slowly rising from the opposite side, a guilty grin on his face.

The look on the man's face could only be described as defeated as he immediately turned back around and went inside, hands up in surrender. From a nearby window, they heard him curse in Russian, before he yelled, "Okay! That is enough for today. Put down your things and leave. You do not have to go home, but you can not stay here. That means you too Jack, I'll see you at work."

"Does this mean I'm done?" Jack shouted back.

"Yes! Just put down things and go, I'll pick them up. Oi... I am so done."

* * *

><p>"Uh, Fishlegs? Where are the twins?" Astrid asked, as she walked out of the extra room at the back of the apartment, wiping dust off her hands from a particularly old box she helped unpack.<p>

From his spot in the living room, cradled on the couch with a book about the Byzantine empire, he murmured, "Uh, they said they were going out. Why?"

"They took a pack of matches and some boxes."

"I'm sure they wouldn't do anything stupid."

"I forgot to mention, they also took my lighter, some newspapers, and the papers from your backpack."

"They what!?"

A bookmark was thrust into the book as it was hurriedly slammed onto the coffee table, followed by him jumping up and pulling on his jacket in a panic.

"Dude, what's the big deal?" She asked, taken aback.

"I'm not gonna let them burn my fanfiction!"

Before she could get another word out, he ran out the front door. No, I mean he literally sprinted down the hallway, dodging the other tenants on an inhuman rampage. Astrid didn't even know he could move like that...

"What's with all the screaming?" Hiccup questioned, popping his head out of his doorway, Toothless peering out by his feet.

"I don't know, but it was pretty freaking hilarious."

"Did... Did he say fanfiction?"

Snorting while trying to keep the laughter down, she bit her lip and nodded, walking into the living room and plopping down onto the couch.

Snickering, he crossed his arms and leaned in the doorway, "What are you laughing for? You write fanfics too."

"Pfft, what? No I don't."

"Yeah you do. Remember I found that one about those guys from Supernatural doing the do?"

Flushing a shade of pink Hiccup never saw before, Astrid threw him the nastiest look she could manage, which was enough to scare off a wild pig. Toothless immediately backed away and hid underneath the bed, leaving Hiccup to cower beneath the wicked gaze of the

blonde.

"Yeah, well you better hurry up and get ready for work, you little-"

"I'm already dressed and on my way out, Elvira. So while I'm out, please don't let the twins burn down my apartment." The boy chuckled as he fixed his green tie and tucked it underneath his vest.

"Eh, can't make you any promises, Leonardo. I'm gonna be heading out too."

As he strolled by her, pulling the sleeves on his white shirt down to cover his tattoos, he let out a small gasp and quipped, "Oooh, really? Is it safe for you to be in public, Mistress of Darkness?"

She grabbed pillow off the couch and tossed it, hitting him in the face with a pop. "Yeah, but unfortunately, my black dress is at the dry cleaners. Now hurry up and get out of here so your cat and I can trash your apartment."

"Pfft, you kidding? We all know where his loyalty lies."

"Really?"

"Astrid, I could get him to pee on you if I wanted. So, unless you wanna smell like a litter box-"

Another pillow smacked him across the face from the couch, with Astrid standing up prepared to launch another one. Letting out a snigger, Hiccup grabbed his keys and jacket, making it out the door before she could land another blow.

Blowing her hair out of her bangs, she plopped back down on the sofa, and found a little black furball sitting next to her, leering in her direction.

"...What?" She mumbled.

Toothless just meowed and twitched his whiskers as he jumped down, holding his tail high as he slinked back in Hiccup's room.

* * *

><p>E. Aster Bunnymund was never fond of this time of year. In all honesty, he hated it.<p>

Before work, he quickly got dressed in the silence of his apartment and took a long stroll, heading towards one store in particular. The air had a gloomy heaviness to it, it even seemed to stick to his skin and drag him down. But he pushed against it, this invisible force he only seemed to feel since everyone else seemed completely unaffected. Aster felt a sour taste infiltrate his mouth from the coffee he had this morning, that being the only thing consumed, so he tried to swallow it down, only to have it taste even worse. Sighing with a mixture of contempt and exhaustion, he pushed himself down the street at a steady pace, a fish fighting against the current.

Without having to look up, he sharply turned and walked into a store, the bell on the door jingling to announce his arrival.

The man behind the counter was bent over, riffling through a few things and said cheerily as he turned around, "Welcome to Frank's Flowers! How may I help- Oh... Um, nice to see you again, Aster."

The other male nodded in his direction and headed towards the back, murmuring, "Nice ta see you too, Frank."

"It's, uh... It's that time of year again, huh?"

"...Yeah."

The man, Frank, nodded his head, looking downward as he shuffled his feet awkwardly, twitching the mustache on his upper lip. Aster stuffed his hands in his coat pockets, sighing as he overlooked each and every bouquet of flowers, but none of them were deemed good enough by his standards. They were either too dull, or there weren't enough flowers, or they had too many odd colors. The azaleas looked nice, but so did the zinnias, not to mention the carnations...

After searching through every flower, picking through each petal, he found a hidden gem stuck behind the wilting roses. A decent-sized bouquet rich with delicate, little wonders; it held plump bulbs on green stems, exuberant lilies striped in pink and yellow, speckled here and there with a touch of baby's breath.

Aster dropped the item on the counter, digging in his pocket to take out his wallet. Before he could pull a bill out, the man stuck a hand out and said, "Don't worry about paying. This time, it's on me."

Hesitantly, he slowly placed the bill back in, murmuring, "You sure?"

"Of course! You're one of my best customers. I'll let you have this one."

Giving a sincere smile, Aster took the bouquet and nodded to the man, walking out with the flowers firmly grasped in his hand. The sun started to shine a bit brighter, filtering through the golden leaves and delicately tracing patterns on the withered grass below. A few birds sat on ledges or branches, bathing in the soft light before it would disappear completely behind a blanket of winter. The man rubbed the back of his neck, ruffling some of his bluish-grey hair as his weary green eyes searched for familiar landmarks on his way to his final stop.

The crisp air filled his lungs with autumn leaves and burning wood. He always liked the sorts of smells in the air around this time, but not today. Despite the neutral look on his face, he was breaking on the inside. The beautiful rays of early morning couldn't break through the turmoil coursing through his veins, nor could the chattering of fat, little birds crack through the lead that weighed down his heart. If someone could pull back the surface of Bunnymund, they would find a broken man, misshapen and twisted in ways that no human could ever really handle.

Without realizing it, he found himself at his destination. His eyes were casted to the ground, immediately recognizing the sidewalk in front of black, iron gates and the earthy grass just ahead beginning to die. Aster took a deep breath and strolled into the cemetery.

All around him, thick grey gravestones stared back at him like blank faces as he passed through the aisles, the familiar crunch of leaves underneath his feet the only sound. The abundance of tall trees cast shadows all around, placing each sleeping soul in a soft darkness. Far ahead, in a circle of young trees that stretched for the sky, there was a small grave, bathed in shimmering light. The headstone stood out in a virgin white, polished and cleaned as if it was put there recently.

Aster quietly advanced towards it, taking a shaky breath as he sat on his knees, placing the bouquet carefully in front of it.

He whispered, "Hey there sweetie, look what I brought ya. I-I know you don't like pink, but... But I know you like lilies..."

The wind rustled slightly, shaking the leaves in front of him as if it were a response.

"I just wanted to come visit you before work. I know you hate it when I'm busy, s-so that's why I came early... Oh, and by the way, I-I'm trying to quit smoking. I'm sorry about doing it in the first place, but I guess I just picked up the habit after you..."

He let out a sigh and brushed his thumb over the dates, from 2000 to 2008.

"I-I just wanted to tell you...happy birthday... You would've been 13 today, love..."

Would've.

The minute that word slipped past his lips, tears welled up in his eyes, breaking past the barrier as they slipped down like rain drops, plopping against the earth with thick thuds. Any strength he tried to build up all morning deteriorated within seconds, as he choked back sobs threatening to come out. Breathing became a chore, his damaged lungs taking the toll of the pain racking through his body.

"I'm... I'm so sorry, love... I'm so sorry..."

He wrapped his arms around the gravestone, resting his head on top of it, salty tears staining the white stone with black spots. He tried to pretend what he was holding was warm and alive, hugging him back. But all he felt was a ring of iciness encircling him.

The filtered sunshine speckled around the ground waved as a breeze shook the branches above, making the yellow splotches dance around and whip back and forth across his back. He tried choking back the sobs, the sounds similar to an animal in pain, but they continued to push him down and fly out of his weakened lungs. That is until he heard other voices infiltrate the silence and bring him out of his state.

Quickly sitting up, Aster wiped his tear stained cheeks and gave the grave a weak smile, before leaning over and pressing his lips to the

top of the stone in a chaste kiss.

"I-I'll try to visit you more often, love. I promise." He said, standing up and giving the smooth surface an affectionate rub. "I've got to get going now. Just remember that I love you and I'll see you again real soon."

Backing away, Aster offered the grave a small smile and a wave as he fixed his coat, strolling out of the cemetery with that heavy feeling weighing down his chest now gone, replaced with an odd sense of relief.

* * *

><p>Taking in a deep breath, Hiccup strolled into his new workplace, trying to seem confident even though he felt like jelly about to plop on the floor. Today was officially his first day on the job, and he prepared himself the night before to the point where he was ready for anything. Literally anything. Like if a zombie outbreak just happened to start in the middle of work, he would know what to do. Or at least know how to make it out alive.<p>

Swallowing down those damnable little butterflies that tried to surface once more, he made his way to Mr. Ostern's office, repeating a mantra of "you can do it" and "don't screw this up" to himself.

With a knock at the door, the man on the other side granted him entrance and gave him a cheery grin upon seeing the boy as he walked in, helping alleviate some of the nervousness.

"Good to see you Henrik! I hope you're ready to begin work?" The director said with a kind smile as he stood up from his desk.

Gluings his hands down to his sides, he nodded and cleared his throat, "Y-yes sir."

"Are you nervous?"

"...a little bit."

"Aw, that's okay, son. You've just got a case of the first day jitters."

The man gave him a hearty pat on the back, nearly toppling the boy over as he handed him a small name tag, the words 'Assistant Curator: Henrik Haddock' printed on it in bright, gold letters.

"Okay, son, you're going to be heading down to the new Nordic exhibit and check in with the chief curator you'll be working under. His name's Daniel, not much older than you. He should help you get settled in a jiffy."

Hiccup looked down at the name tag in his hands, swallowing down a small lump forming at the back of his throat.

Chief curator? Crap, he totally forgot about him.

"Alright, just head back down this corridor and into the main lobby, down into the modern art exhibit, then take a right and keep

straight. You should be able to find it from there." The man said with another hearty smack to the boy's back as he ushered him out of the office, sending him off with a wave and a smile.

Stiffening his wobbly spine, Hiccup pinned the name tag to his vest and followed his set path, keeping his head down as that small voice in the back of his head griped on about who might this Daniel be. He was supposed to be around his age, so he didn't really know what to expect. Maybe he'd be like one of those hipsters and try to sound profound and wise, when in reality he didn't know shit. Or some pothead who would sneak off and smoke behind the building, leaving everything to him. Most importantly, would he be nice, or parallel his cousin Snotlout to a T? He prayed to every single god he knew that it wouldn't be the latter...

The Nordic exhibit lie dead ahead, it's bold letters overhead crafted out of driftwood and scrawled with runes. Creeping in with the stealth of a mouse, Hiccup curled his fists against his chest, keeping an eye out for anyone else in there. Scanning over a few items, he was pleased to see ancient leather shoes and rusty daggers sealed underneath glass cases and authentic viking helmets set on their own stands. As he looked over a mannequin wearing old, Scandinavian clothing, he remembered the tales his father used to tell him as a child. He would tell him about gruesome beasts covered in scaly armor that could eat men whole, and of the brave Vikings who battled them to their dying breaths. Well, the good thing about working here was that it reminded him of home.

With a smile, he looked over the other items thrown about the room, until his eyes fell on an item in particular which brought about an unnerving sense of familiar dread. It was a painting of a bloody, scarred warrior, with glowing yellow eyes and a ghastly grin, showing off his bloodstained teeth. At the bottom of it, there was a label that read in English and runes: Draugr.

This creature was also part of his childhood stories, but not in a good way. His father told him about it one night, when he was caught sneaking out in the dark. He said that young children who went out in the dead of night were easy prey for the Draugr, a Viking zombie that had the strength of a hundred men and killed for pleasure. The tale worked and kept Hiccup inside for many nights after that, until one fateful night when he was 13 and Snoutlout and the twins decided to pull a prank on him, which involved his cousin dressed as the creature and hiding under his bed. Suffice to say, it scarred him for life.

Hiccup felt a shiver crawl down his back as he stared into those grim eyes, until he felt something crawling down his shoulder.

A whisper ghosted across his ear, "What are you doing here?"

Letting out a shrill gasp, he flailed his arms and turned around, clutching his heart when he found himself face to face with another person instead of a beast ready to chop his head off.

It was a boy around his age, maybe a little older, with long, red hair pulled back into a short braid at the back of his head, and eyes so dark they could put Norman Bates to shame. He had a long face and his lips were pressed into a thin line as he scowled and crossed his arms across his chest, scrutinizing the boy in front of

him.

Stammering, Hiccup managed to calm his palpitating heart and say, "Uh, I-I'm looking for Daniel?"

The deranged-looking delinquent flashed him a murderous smile and growled out, "That would be me..."

Aaaaaaand there went any hopes Daniel could be a nice guy...

"Oh..." Hiccup stood straight and brushed himself off, extending a hand to the man with a sincere smile, "I'm Henrik, the new assistant curator."

Ignoring the gesture, the other man just looked at the boy and huffed, "So you're the fresh meat, huh?"

"I-I beg your pardon?"

"First thing first, kid." He began, folding his arms behind his back as he stalked back and forth in front of the boy like a tiger, "Don't call me Daniel. I will also not accept 'Danny' or tolerate 'Danny-Boy'. Call me those things and I will gladly skin you."

He pulled Hiccup forward by the shoulder and leaned in close, pointing a finger in his face, "You may call me Daniel in front of our boss, but for the rest of our time together, you may only refer to me as _Dagur_. Understood?"

"Uh..."

"_Understood_?" The redhead growled, pressing his sharp nose against Hiccup's as he gripped the front of the boy's collar.

"Y-yes, sir."

"Good!" The look on Dagur's face softened to something akin to kindness as he folded his arms behind his back once more and backed away. "Second thing: I own your ass, so don't even think about giving me lip. If you wanna be bumped up, then you do what I say, when I say it. Got it?"

"Yes, Dagur."

"Since you're a newbie, I'll go easy on you today and show you the ropes. Try to keep up because this ain't no kindergarten class, kid." He gave the boy a passive-aggressive pat on the back as he ushered him out of the room, a sadistic grin curling on his cheeks.

Hiccup forgot to include '_deranged redheaded lunatic_' in his list of things to be ready for.

* * *

><p>Out of dozens of towering skyscrapers, stark against the skyline, stood a massive tower made of black glass. It grew and curled against the clouds, feeding on the shadows it casted over the city, swallowing any hopes of escaping its sight. In slick, curvy letters, the words "Black Industries" shimmered in the sunlight across the

front of it.<p>

At the base of the structure, a slick, black Jaguar pulled up in front of the entrance, its engine growling as a uniformed man opened up the back door, bowing his head as a man in a sharp, black suit slipped out. His slick, raven hair shined in the sunlight, and his greyish skin had an aura that read of pure deviousness. Everything about him sang 'dastardly mastermind'; the way he swaggered into the building, making everyone look down out of both submission and fright as he passed through the lobby and into the elevator, causing the receptionist on the top floor to squeak as he passed by.

"G-good afternoon, Mr. P-Pitchiner..." She mumbled, a mousy girl who cowered beneath her enormous glasses. He passed a small glance over at her, causing her to release another squeak, before heading to the end of the hallway. In front of him stood a mammoth, ebony doorway, which he opened to reveal a massive office.

Stepping in, he released a sigh as he trekked along the carpet through the gloomy room, until he reached the desk and grabbed a remote control, flicking a button and causing the blinded windows to open, letting light creep in. He took a seat at the half-circle shaped desk close to a window, giving him a perfect view of the city he would eventually claim as his.

Curling a finger under his chin, he allowed a content smile to slip on his thin lips. All of Burgess would be his one day.

Every business owner would bow down and allow his sharp claws, dripping with oozing blackness, to capture and consume until the city was nothing more than pitch black. Nearly half of the city's business owners already have.

All, except one. The smile faded as the thought of that one, particular person who was just prolonging the inevitable crawled into his head. Nicholas St. North was a stubborn man. This he knew all too well. But even the toughest of mountains come crumbling down eventually...

His thoughts adverted to the others working alongside him. There was that insufferable Aussie who had a bit of an overbite, the chipper bird who looked like the rainbow splattered all over her, the golden mute (whom he disliked the most because of personal reasons), and the newest one, Jack Frost. He paid particular attention to the youngest member of the man's crew, with a head of white hair and the attitude of a child. His spies had told him that the old Russian had a soft spot for him, so perhaps there was a weak link in his midst that he could easily crack open given the right opportunity.

He pushed the intercom button and spoke as clear as thunder, "Sarah!"

On the other end, there was an audible squeak as the girl scrambled to answer, "Y-yes, Mr. Pitchiner?"

"I need you to do me a favor."

"What d-do you need, sir?"

"I need you to collect all the information you can on a young man by

the name of Jackson Frost."

* * *

><p>Faintly glowing against the cosmos, besides a few weak stars that dared to shine above the city, the moon took its spot in the sky. It slowly crept, casting its gaze over everything it could as the world beneath it pumped like a heart. It peered into every crevice, finally settling over an apartment complex as a young man with wispy white hair unlocked his front door and slumped inside, releasing a yawn the minute he closed it.<p>

Jack stretched backwards, feeling the pops in his spine before hunching over and walking to the couch, crashing down on his face. It had been an awfully long day.

Including his little favor this morning, Jack went directly to work afterward and was not in the least bit glad to find a group of sorority girls all asking for their house logo or something from him. I mean, he probably would've enjoyed being able to touch so many girls at once, but the noisy birds were chittering away like canaries. Not to mention, they always found something to either point out or complain about. Later on, a few drunken businessmen came in, a few with neckties tied around their heads, and asked for some ridiculous things in ridiculous places. One guy asked for an Oprah quote above his right butt cheek, another wanted some Chinese serenity symbol on his chest, and the last one (who was probably the most inebriated) demanded a rainbow dolphin on his face.

Suffice to say, Jack did them, but he purposely butchered them for the hell of it. The Oprah quote was turned into one by Dr. Seuss, the "serenity" symbol he wrote actually meant 'ass monkey', and the rainbow dolphin remained a rainbow dolphin. That was a opportunity Jack absolutely couldn't pass up.

It was funny earlier, but now he couldn't give two shits. His hand was stiff and cramping, a fat, ugly blister forming on his middle finger. His shirt was stained in booze, sweat and wet ink from one of the businessmen who decided to give him a hug as thanks, directly after he was finished. And to top it off, a gross bruise formed on his thigh from a few of the girls who were bickering in the shop and spilled a bottle of water, causing him to slip.

All he wanted to do now was melt into the sofa and stick his hand in the freezer. That is, until his phone began vibrating in his pocket.

"Ugh... fuck me." He groaned, flipping over to fish the damn thing out, wincing as he looked at the bright screen.

A new message... from Baby Tooth. Fantastic.

Punching in the code with glazed eyes, he read it out loud, "Hey frosted flake, u up to anything?"

He quickly typed back, "I'm busy dying. Call back tomorrow."

"Aww, what happened?"

"Long day, what you want?"

"Why don't u give your little dragon boy a call?"

Jack's eyes shot wide open and he sat up, arching a brow at the words in front of him.

"What?"

"Come on, dude. He's probably had a long day too, why don't u give him a quick call?"

"...what are u up to?" He leered at the device, bringing it closer to his face.

"Nothing. I'm going out, and I don't want u to get bored without me, my little snowflake ;p."

Before he could respond, another message beeped and read, "Catch you later, prince snowball. Tell your gay lover I said hi!"

A sigh of defeat escaped his lips as his head lolled back onto the couch. Maybe calling the kid up wouldn't be such a bad thing, right? They've talked over the phone before and that conversation went well, for the most part, so this wouldn't be a stretch.

Before his head could catch up to the rest of him, his fingers were already scrolling through his contacts, finding one person in particular and hitting the call button without a second thought.

* * *

><p>The cool, breezy night air washed over freckled skin and shook brunet hair back and forth. A pair of green eyes shimmered and reflected city lights, casting their gaze over the line where the sky and the plethora of buildings crashed together.<p>

Resting his cheek in his hand, Hiccup carefully listened to the snores pouring from inside, he being the only one in the household awake. Tomorrow the twins would be heading back home, mostly because they missed their two-headed snake. Soon after that, Fishlegs would be off too, then eventually, Astrid. It wasn't easy having to stay and watch his only friends leave, back to the world where he truly belonged. Not that he was regretting moving here, or anything...

Sighing, he opted to head back inside until he felt something vibrating against his backside. Quirking a brow, he reached into his back pocket to find a familiar number flashing on his phone's screen. With an odd twinge growing in his stomach, he hit answer and pressed the device to his ear.

"Good evening, Dragon Boy!" He heard Jack say on the other end.

Silently sniggering, Hiccup said, "Well of it isn't my lovely husband."

"Hehe, you really think I'm lovely?"

"Yes, Jack. You're awful _purty_."

"Aww, aren't you sweet. But there's something I've been meaning to ask you."

"What is it?"

He heard Jack pause, taking a breath before speaking, "If we're engaged, how come you haven't put out yet?"

"Pfft! Oh gods... Jack, I wouldn't sleep with you for all the money in the world."

"Hmm... how about five bucks?"

"How about no?"

He groaned, "Oh come on, Hiccup. I'll show you a good time! And I'll even throw in a coupon for some orange juice!"

"Hm, as tempting as that sounds, I'm gonna have to decline."

"Aw, fine. But you're missing out on all this, buddy!"

"Mm, yep. It's a shame, really. I'm missing out on shagging with a bony teen who hangs out in a parlor all day and sticks needles in people."

He heard the other boy guffaw, "Oh please! You're the one with the bony ass!"

"Then how come you wanna get me into bed with you, hm?"

"Well, I..." He could hear the other boy gulp and shift around, "Huh, you've got me there, Lizard Tongue. I guess I've got a fetish for nerdy fishbones with pretty eyes~"

Tugging at his collar, Hiccup felt a small heat grow along his cheeks. Trying to switch the topic, he blurted out, "So! Uh, Jack..."

"Yeah?"

"I've got two things to ask you."

"Ask away, Dragon Boy."

"Why do you know where I live?"

"Oh, heh... To be clear, I'm not stalking you or anything. That girl who was helping you move in with your friends a while back told me. She came in and talked about a 'Dragon Boy' moving nearby and I was a little curious, is all..."

"Ooh... that explains a lot."

"So, what was your other question?"

"Um... on the first day I really got settled in, I remember being on my balcony and I saw this guy with white hair looking up at me... That wasn't you, was it?"

The breath in Jack's throat hitched as a memory flashed through his head, of freckled skin and auburn hair bathed in amber light.

"Shit... T-that was _you_?"

"Yeah? You really scared the shit out of me, dude."

"Sorry, I do weird things when I'm drunk. Once I accidentally ended up in Canada with a Sesame Street sticker on my forehead."

Hiccup let out a loud snort, slapping a hand over his mouth as he looked behind him and listened to the snores.

"For the love of Eir, Jack! Are you a frat boy?"

"Pfft, maybe. Wanna go on a panty raid some time?"

"Uh, no thanks."

"Hmm... Then how about we just hang out?"

Hiccup paused and blinked. Quirking his brows, he felt that odd twinge in his belly once more when he answered back, "Hang out?"

"Yeah, you know? _Hang out_? It's this thing people do when they wanna be friends and shit. I guess you wouldn't understand since you were raised by cats."

"Hehe, for your information, I was raised by sheep."

Jack snorted and snickered into the phone, "So what do you say, _Sheep Boy_?"

"I-uh... Y-yeah, sure. Why not? Unless you're planning on getting me drunk and tricking me into going to Vegas with you so we can act out The Hangover."

"Aww, damn. Well there goes my weekend plans."

"How about you show me around a bit tomorrow, and we'll see where the day goes."

"Sounds good to me, Fishbone."

"Heh, alright then, Frosted Flake."

"Then I shall text you in the morning, Scaly Skin."

"I shall await your call, Snowball Sucker."

"...Dragon Breath."

"Dandruff Flakes."

"Freckled Egg."

"Frost Licker."

"Lizard Tongue."

"Ice Cube."

"...Twink."

"Pssht-what?! What did you just call me? You cock-sucking little cu-"

"_Hiccup_!"

Hiccup swallowed down his words and slowly turned around to find a very pissed-looking Astrid in the doorway to the balcony in her pjs, scowling while she carried a pillow in her right hand.

"...I'm gonna have to call you back. Goodnight Jack."

"Goodnight my darling little Hiccup."

Without looking, he hung up and slipped the phone back into his pocket while the blonde slowly advanced, pillow raised above her head.

"Astrid look, I'm sorry if I woke you up- _ow! _Ow! Hey! Ah! For the love of-quit it! _I think you've made your point!_"

40 pillow slaps later and Astrid quietly went back inside, leaving a red and sore Hiccup on the balcony floor in the fetal position.

* * *

><p>Oh my gosh! More notes from me! Whoopie, I am such a dork!<p>

This entire chapter is made out of snippets of chapters I had worked on and deleted and other ideas thrown into the mix.

The title was inspired by the movie Pulp Fiction, which I'd recommend to anyone who has yet to see it. Warning though, it's not for the faint of heart.

And I cannot take all the credit for this. My beautiful and amazing partner helped to review for me beforehand and inspire a few parts, mostly the last scene. It's a true fact that he has the tendency to call me Dandruff Flakes, while I return with Dragon Breath. But then again, he really is the Hiccup to my Jack.

Speaking of which, Ian if you're still reading this, I hope all my stupid jokes made you laugh because you are truly my inspiration. I honestly love you with all my heart and I know I've said this a million times, but I'll say it again because I want to:

Will you marry me?

6. NL:Update

I actually had written all this down, but my stupid fucking tablet is an honest to god piece of shit I want to smash with a bat, so I have

to write this all over again.

My "fiancÃ©" is a cold hearted bastard. My depression and anxiety have gotten much worse and I've contemplated suicide multiple times. I've lost everything I hold dear. So, as you can tell, it's been very hard trying to write.

In other news, I've graduated with my associates of science and I've almost got my diploma, so I'll have a lot of free time to work over the summer. I'm also (technically) opening up commissions for both writing and art pieces, and if you want a sample or want a peek at my portfolio, go ahead and shoot me a message.

I'm also almost done with that smutty fic I promised oh so long ago. It's long and weird but I liked how it turned out. But, in all honesty, I'm afraid to post anything on here because my fiancÃ© used to review all my work for me, but now he's pushing me away, and I'm afraid to share my work with anyone else.

And I've had an idea for quite some time: I posted this story a long ass time ago, so as you can see, my writing has changed and developed more. Because of this, I'm honestly not happy with this fic. I've thought about deleting it or just plain ignoring it, but I had another idea in mind. What if I just rewrite the whole thing? I'd really prefer that, since it'd give me the chance to come up with a better story and character development. There'd still be the plot and elements from the current version, though. I feel like it would make the story a hundred times better and persuade me to update more often given I have more ideas and material to work with once I've dished it all out. What do you guys think? I'd appreciate your ideas or opinions on the matter.

Other than all that, you can reach me at my new tumblr, it's on my little account screen, or my deviantart, which would be fine too. Just ignore that damn fundraiser, it was a stupid idea anyway. It was my mistake thinking anyone would actually give a shit. But it's cool. That sweet boy of mine turned into the fucking ice king. I also wouldn't mind chatting over Skype. I'm seriously stinking lonely and I'd appreciate someone to talk to, since it keeps my thoughts off of my depression.

If if you have any comments, questions, or concerns, y'all know where to reach me. Thank you.

End
file.